

# MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

Vol. LIX

November, 1916

No. II

## IN MEMORY OF LAFAYETTE

How Americans Are Paying Their  
Debt of Gratitude to France

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A FIELD TENT-HOSPITAL OF THE AMERICAN AMBULANCE SERVICE IN FRANCE, READY FOR USE  
BEHIND THE FIGHTING-FRONT

AS soon as Richard N. Hall heard that there was a chance for young Americans to go to France, there to help in the hospital service, he filed his application. He was a student at Dartmouth, son of a physician at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and was highly, not to say affectionately, recommended by every one who knew him.

William R. Hereford, executive secretary of the famous American Ambulance,

of France, with headquarters at 14 Wall Street, New York, was looking for boys like that. He invited Hall to come on; and finally Hall did come, swinging into the Wall Street quarters, head up, shoulders back.

These offices are on the top floor of a sky-scraper. Out of the windows one can look east, across the harbor, across Long Island, and, as it almost seems, across the ocean and over to France itself.



THE AMERICAN AMBULANCE, OR HOSPITAL, AT NEUILLY, ACROSS THE SEINE FROM PARIS—THIS FINE BUILDING HAD BEEN ALMOST COMPLETED AS A SCHOOL, THE LYCÉE PASTEUR, WHEN THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT OFFERED IT FOR ITS PRESENT USE

Half an hour later young Hall was leaving. His head was still up. He looked out in the direction of the invisible shore on which his heart was fixed. He was saying things about the France of Washington and Lafayette, how he had been brought up on the traditions of that historic friendship. But there was a suspicion of moisture in his eyes, and Mr. Hereford was patting him on the back, trying to cheer him up. Physically, Hall had been pronounced too slight.

Last Christmas morning, in the bleak dawn of the mountains, while coming over a rough track in the Vosges with his freight of wounded, a certain other young American—Robert Matter, a Princeton man—saw where the preceding ambulance had been blown down the mountainside by shell-fire. As soon as he could he stopped, went back to investigate, and found the driver dead.

In life, this driver had been so slender that only by a special course of training under the physical director of his college had he been built up sufficiently to get himself accepted. A gruff major delivered

a brief oration over the boy's body, that afternoon, spoke of the bravery and unmitigated devotion of "this child," then pinned to his torn tunic the Croix de Guerre; and so they buried him with military honors, in that part of Alsace which is once more French. On his grave they put the inscription:

RICHARD HALL, AN AMERICAN WHO DIED FOR FRANCE.

It was the same boy who had looked out over New York Harbor a few months before and talked of Lafayette.

"And now," writes a friend of Hall's, also in the ambulance service, "we still pass that spot, and we salute. Our breath comes quicker, our eyes grow dim, we grip the wheel a little tighter, we pass—better and stronger men."

#### A SERVICE THAT MAKES MEN

As a matter of fact, more than one college president here in the United States has come to recognize that the work of the American Ambulance in France is doing just that—not only saving the

**EDITOR'S NOTE**—Most of the illustrations accompanying this article are from photographs taken under the supervision of the French government, and presented to the American Ambulance Field Service in recognition of heroic conduct. These and other pictures are exhibited in the United States by the Triangle Film Corporation, the proceeds being given to the Field Service funds.





A TYPICAL SCENE IN ONE OF THE WARDS OF THE AMERICAN AMBULANCE AT NEUILLY, WITH MEMBERS OF THE HOSPITAL STAFF AND CONVALESCENT FRENCH SOLDIERS

human wreckage that comes back to it from the battle-front, but also turning into "better and stronger men" these volunteers from American universities who are sharing in the work. They have seen these undergraduates and young alumni sail away for their three months' service in Paris or six months' service in the field,

that the service has grown so stupendously in the two years and more since the war began.

Right at the outset of the struggle a number of Americans who shared Richard Hall's feeling toward France suggested an American hospital to the French authorities. In France any military hospital is



A GATHERING OF AMERICAN AND OTHER RED CROSS AMBULANCES IN THE COURT OF THE INVALIDES, IN PARIS—IN THE LEFT-HAND CORNER IS A CAPTURED GERMAN AEROPLANE

or longer, and have seen them come back with characters fortified, with larger and clearer vision.

The improvement extends even to the flesh.

One has been killed thus far, it is true, and many have been wounded. About fifty of them have been decorated for valor. All of them are perpetually taking risks. Yet, it has seemed as if these boys bore charmed lives, thrived on danger, developed themselves in that school of hardship over there as they never could have done in any other college.

It is largely due to their cooperation

an ambulance, so they called it the American Ambulance. The authorities accepted the proposal, and turned over to their American friends the all but completed buildings of a great new school, the Lycée Pasteur, in Neuilly, which is a suburb of Paris. Immediately American architects and surgeons began to transform these buildings into a vast hospital, with every improvement then known to the world.

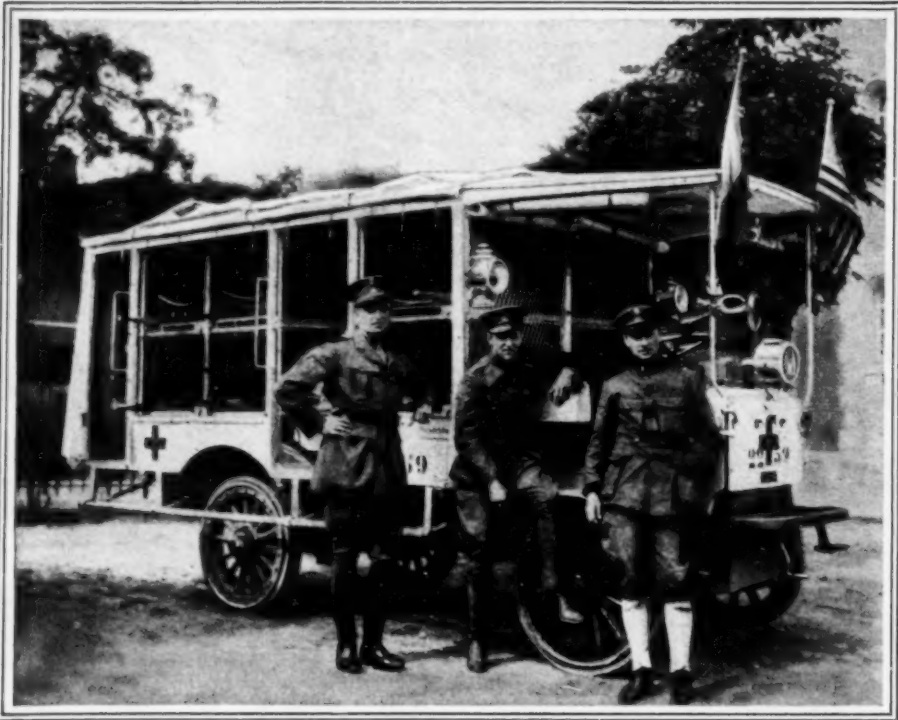
There has been a splendid yet fearful advance in surgery these past two years. The American Ambulance has at least kept pace with it. For, from the first, to this hospital the military authorities sent



AMERICANS AT THE BEDSIDE OF A WOUNDED FRENCH OFFICER IN THE AMERICAN AMBULANCE—  
THE DOCTOR ON THE RIGHT IS DR. JAMES, OF HINTON, WEST VIRGINIA



IN THE LINEN-ROOM OF THE AMERICAN AMBULANCE AT NEUILLY—FRENCH EXPERTS HAVE  
GIVEN SPECIAL PRAISE TO THIS DEPARTMENT OF THE HOSPITAL



THE FAMOUS "BIRD-CAGE CAR," PRESENTED BY AMERICANS, AND SPECIALLY USED FOR THE SPEEDY EVACUATION OF HOSPITAL TRAINS—IT CARRIES ABOUT TWENTY WOUNDED MEN

none but the severest cases. It was a Spartan compliment which wasn't lost.

Fully ninety-five out of every hundred patients received were saved; not only saved, but restored somewhat to the image in which God had made them. Men with their faces shot away were made presentable. Bent and broken bodies were rebuilt almost as good as new. The place has become a sort of scientific Lourdes, where miracles are performed.

Of these blasted human shapes there is a shifting population constantly in the Neuilly hospital of about six hundred. Then, besides, there are two smaller hospitals at Saint-Cloud, also in the Paris suburbs, with a capacity of seventy-five; there is a portable tent-hospital with a capacity of more than a hundred; and, lastly, there is Hospital B, at Juilly, which is twenty-five miles closer to the firing-line than Paris.

Hospital B is especially interesting, not

only because it can take care of two hundred stricken warriors at a time, but also because the entire expense of it is borne by Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney.

But the average mind must begin to limp and stagger if it once becomes entangled in the finances of the war, even in the finances of giving. The point is that this giving has never been a mere matter of money. The amount of money given has, of course, been fairly stupendous. It takes about a thousand dollars a day to keep the American Ambulance alone in operation, without regard to the initial expense.

The thing to be considered is that all this has been an outpouring of gold transmuted into something finer by imagination, by knowledge, by gratitude, and real devotion; just like that gift of their youth by the college boys who enlisted, and are enlisting still, and will continue to enlist; the gift of their skill and time and comfort



by the surgeons and dentists, the nurses and auxiliaries from America, who are working over there now, day and night, with no thought of earthly reward.

These Americans, rich and poor, are giving all they can. They know that it isn't enough. There never will be enough, so long as the war goes on. But, with most of them, it is literally all they have.

#### THE AMERICAN MOTOR-AMBULANCES

The field-service of the Ambulance now comprises eight sections of twenty-five cars each. Most of these are light, American cars—"mechanical fleas," as they have been affectionately dubbed—which can climb over roads formerly impassable to almost any form of transport other than mules.

Close up to the front these little cars go, driven by their American volunteers; often at night, through black darkness, where the gleam of a lantern would be

fatal; often under fire; through all sorts of weather; over all sorts of ground. Flanders, the Champagne, Verdun, Alsace—the only motor-ambulances in Alsace are those furnished and manned by Americans—have all seen their work.

Thus they have transported one hundred and seventy-five thousand wounded since the war began.

The French and Belgians have never been too occupied, moreover, to appreciate these labors. For example, at the time of the first sanguinary struggle around Ypres, General Putz wrote that the Americans had removed the three thousand wounded and all the equipment from the hospitals of Elverdinghe, although to accomplish this they had to work five days and nights without interruption and under continual fire. Scarcely a day goes by without its *citation* in which some section or other gets honorable mention.



A MOTOR-AMBULANCE PRESENTED BY THE CITIZENS OF GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS—WITH IT IS  
A. PIATT ANDREW, FORMERLY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE UNITED STATES TREASURY,  
NOW RANKING OFFICER OF ONE OF THE FIELD SECTIONS



Perhaps no thrill that these boys of the American Ambulance ever experience, though, can quite equal the one that is theirs as they watch a battle between aeroplanes, far, far up, and know that the directing intelligence of at least one of these soaring, fateful atoms may also have

as a unit, but when American fliers like William K. Thaw, Elliot C. Cowdin, and Norman Prince were already winning fame for themselves and honor for America.

For Chapman also there began a series of fresh adventures. They were adven-



AN INSPECTION OF LIGHT AMERICAN MOTOR-AMBULANCES READY FOR SERVICE AT THE FIGHTING-FRONT

been trained in an American college—perhaps their own!

#### THE AMERICAN FLYING SQUADRON

The American flying squadron in France is not very large, but it, too, is distinguished.

It also has lost one man. Victor E. Chapman, of New York, was his name. He was just twenty-seven, a graduate of Harvard.

He was studying architecture at the École des Beaux Arts when the war broke out, and enlisted at once in the Foreign Legion. He wasn't in that famous regiment very long before he was wounded. Then, as a reward for courage in battle, he was transferred to the flying corps. That was before the Franco-American squadron of fliers had come into existence

tures that aroused enthusiasm in France even in such times as these, when heroism is universal.

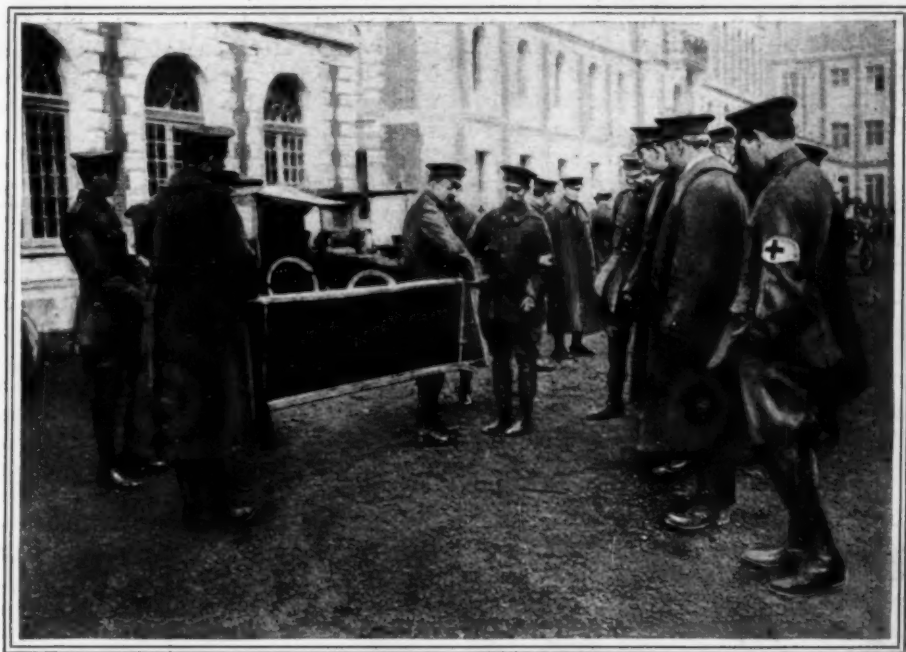
By the time that Chapman joined the Franco-American *escadrille*, less than two months before his death, he had already had no less than seven machines shot from under him, and was accredited with four decisive victories. To this record his death came as a sort of harmonious climax—a final touch, one might almost say, of supreme art.

#### HOW VICTOR CHAPMAN DIED

In a hospital not far from the aviation camp to which Chapman was attached lay a fellow American, Sergeant Balsley, of San Antonio, Texas, wounded in a battle near Verdun and possibly crippled for life. The sergeant asked for an orange, but the



YOUNG AMERICAN VOLUNTEERS FOR THE AMBULANCE SERVICE RECEIVING INSTRUCTION IN THE HANDLING OF WOUNDED MEN



STRETCHER DRILL FOR NEWLY RECRUITED HOSPITAL ATTENDANTS IN THE COURTYARD OF THE AMERICAN AMBULANCE AT NEUILLY



AN AMBULANCE STATION IN A DESERTED FRENCH VILLAGE NEAR THE FIGHTING-FRONT—SOME OF THE MEN ARE LOOKING UP TO WATCH AN ENEMY AEROPLANE

hospital was out of oranges. Hearing of this incident, Chapman—himself a sergeant by this time, and also but just recovering from a wound received a short time before—decided to satisfy his friend's desire. He secured a basket of oranges. In his armored aeroplane he started out for the hospital where his comrade lay.

While he was on his way he saw an air-fight in the distance, far over the German lines. He changed his course for a closer view, and discovered that three French machines were engaged by four of the enemy. He didn't hesitate.

They saw him swirl his machine to a great height, then swoop, bringing his machine gun into play. Two of the enemy plunged to earth forthwith; but a third was in a position to rake the American in turn, and Chapman fell.

"In memory of this citizen of the United States who, inspired by sentiments of lofty idealism, gave his life for the cause of the Allies"—it is seldom that a phrase like that appears in the official bulletins of any army in war-time. Yet that is the language of the French army-order recording Chapman's death. It

was an order which further announced that special religious ceremonies would be held in his honor.

Chapman was regarded by every one who knew him as one of the best and bravest air-pilots in the service; but he would have been the first to deny that he was superior to any of his comrades. Possibly his contention would have been correct. There are no comparisons to be made in terms of the absolute; and absolute courage, absolute excellence—these are the qualities without which no aerial pilot could do his work for a day.

In the French army at present are four distinct types of aeroplanes.

There is the tiny Morane-Saulnier, a monoplane exceedingly swift on the wing, and a rapid climber. It is armed with a machine gun, and is used to chase enemies. There is that other very small and light flier, a biplane this time, called the Caudron, which not only can cope with such nimble adversaries as the Fokkers, but is also much used in getting swift knowledge of fresh troop movements and new artillery emplacements back of the enemy's firing-line.

Then there are the large Farman biplanes, famous for their reliability, by which protracted scouting-tours are carried out, often thirty and forty miles beyond the actual front. Next come the great Voisin machines, also biplanes, which are capable of carrying an extraordinary tonnage in bombs or other impedimenta.

Now, to be even a private in this aerial fleet—"the fourth arm," as it has been called—demands unusual qualities, both native and acquired—keen vision, a ready wit, nerves of steel, a scientific yet intuitional mind, an ability to read maps, a fine sense of direction. Yet scarcely an American has entered the service thus far who has not been either decorated or promoted, or both; not once, but repeatedly.

#### A CORPS D'ÉLITE OF THE AIR

It was this that gained them the signal honor of recognition as an independent

squadron. The thing came about early in the present year when M. Besnard, the French minister of aviation, personally received Lieutenant Thaw, Sergeant Cowdin, and Sergeant Prince.

"In the name of France," said M. Besnard, "I wish to express the national gratitude and appreciation of your efforts, and to inform you that steps will be taken immediately to enroll all American aviators here in one Franco-American squadron."

"This was no light step. It was something unique in the history of the French army. It required special legislation; yet it was carried through without delay.

There were about twenty American aviators then, including those in the aviation school down in southern France, at Pau. Just how many Americans are now at the front is doubtful—ten, possibly; but those in training bring the number up to seventy, at least.



MEN OF THE AMERICAN AMBULANCE FIELD SERVICE AT THE FIGHTING-FRONT, EQUIPPED WITH GAS-MASKS FOR WORK DURING A GERMAN ATTACK

The training is exceedingly severe. The work of the air-pilot is so exacting, and on his judgment the lives of so many thousands of his comrades may hang, that the license itself is a badge of honor. Yet there have been cases like, notably, that of J. R. McConnell, a University of Virginia boy, who secured his license just a month and a day after his admission to the school.

But McConnell had already been decorated with the Croix de Guerre for gal-

their days, or nights, are any the less filled with work and excitement. When Lieutenant Thaw, the other day, was awarded that highest distinction of all, the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and when Sergeants Kiffen Rockwell, of Atlanta, and Bert Hall, of Bowling Green, received the Médaille Militaire, there was ample reason for it.

Hall, by the way, was associated with Chapman in one of the last battles fought by the latter before his death. That day



FRENCH SOLDIERS AND AN AMERICAN AMBULANCE MAN IN A FIRST-LINE TRENCH ON THE FIGHTING-FRONT—THE AMBULANCE MAN IS WILLIAM F. FAY, HARVARD, 1915

lantry while serving with the American Ambulance. It is to young men of this caliber that the Franco-American squadron owes its reputation—abroad, not merely here in America—as a *corps d'élite*.

The American fliers are quartered in a pleasant château, not far from the front. They enjoy certain privileges beyond those of other members of the French army, even the fliers; but this doesn't mean that

a strong enemy squadron attempted to carry out a raid on Bar-le-Duc. Only four of the Franco-American squadron were on hand at the time—Chapman, Hall, Cowdin, Prince. These men took the air at once under command of a French captain. They went up in small battle-planes capable of climbing hundreds of feet a minute, as sensitive as stop-watches in the matter of control.

The captain and Norman Prince, first





FIELD-SERVICE MEN BRINGING WOUNDED SOLDIERS IN HAND-BARROWS FROM THE TRENCHES TO MOTOR-AMBULANCES WAITING FOR THEM A SHORT DISTANCE BEHIND THE FIRING-LINE



WRECKED BY SHELL-FIRE—MANY AMERICAN CARS HAVE BEEN DESTROYED, ALTHOUGH WHEN THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN ONLY ONE DRIVER HAD BEEN KILLED

up, emptied their magazines and had to come down. Then Cowdin's machine gun choked, forcing him to descend. This left Hall and Chapman temporarily alone. They succeeded in maneuvering the enemy away from his intended goal, and in keeping him away until the French aerial patrol arrived.

It was but a day after this that Chapman was wounded; but a few days later that he died. When the young man's father received the news of his son's death, he said:

"If Victor is killed in battle, I am resigned. I am proud that he joined the French army, and I think that every American boy ought to do the same."

#### OTHERS WHO HAVE FALLEN FOR FRANCE

Among the parents of the young Americans fighting in France there has been a beautiful and touching unanimity in this respect. It was so with the mother of Kenneth Weeks, who fell fighting in the Foreign Legion; so with the father of Russell Kelly; so with the families of Henry Farnsworth, John Earle Fiske, Harman Edwin Hall, and others who have given their lives outside the American

Ambulance and the Franco-American squadron of fliers.

For it has been in the Foreign Legion, or, later on, in the French army itself, that most of the boys who remembered Lafayette have given their lives.

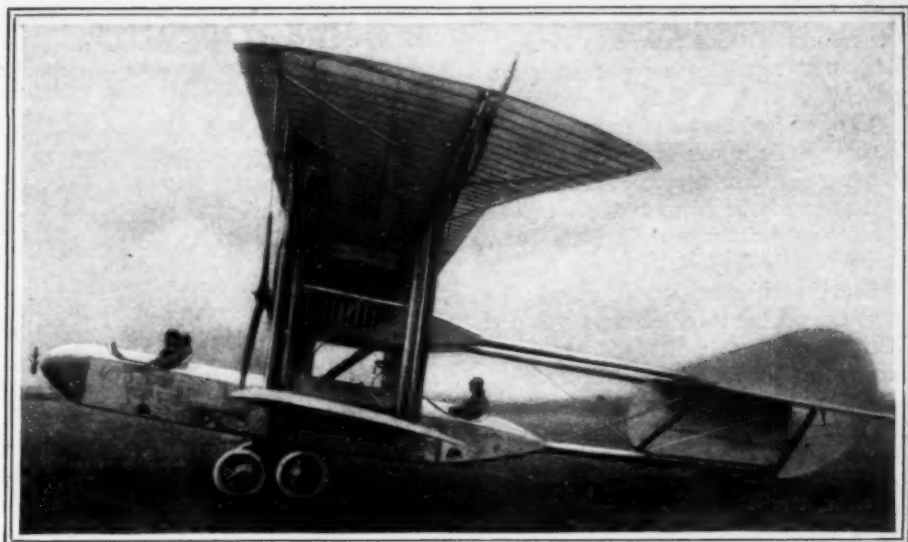
When war was declared, while mobilization was but fairly under way, they formed their little group and marched to the recruiting-station from the Beaux Arts, from the Sorbonne, from the studios of Montmartre and Montparnasse. They were all in the Foreign Legion at first. Then, by another unprecedented act of appreciation, the French government literally adopted these American children as its own, and admitted them to French regiments otherwise composed only of the native-born.

The French government hadn't been slow to recognize the quality of this handful of American volunteers, any more than it has been slow to recognize that of the fliers and the ambulance men. They were, indeed, a sort of moral and military aristocracy, peers of the best among their comrades-at-arms.

There was Kelly, of New York, for example. His brave, gay letters from the



A MOTOR-AMBULANCE SEEKING TEMPORARY SHELTER FROM FIRE BEHIND A ROW OF SHATTERED BUILDINGS IN A FRENCH VILLAGE NEAR THE FIRING-LINE



ONE OF THE BIG ARMORED BIPLANES THAT FORM PART OF THE EQUIPMENT OF THE FRANCO-AMERICAN FLYING SQUADRON

front will form a permanent contribution to the literature of the war—the war as seen through the eyes of an American boy who served in the very thickest of it until he died. Kelly was reported killed at Givenchy, in June, 1915, in the same action which put a period to the career of gallant young Harman Edwin Hall, of Chicago.

Almost at the same time and place Kenneth Weeks and Henry Farnsworth met their end. Both were Bostonians, members of old New England families. Both had been repeatedly wounded, but had refused to accept the chance of being invalided home.

Farnsworth was a Harvard man, just twenty-five. When he declared his purpose to have some share in the spreading conflict, his friends saw to it that he was offered a position as a war correspondent on the staff of one of the Boston newspapers. In that capacity he would have had a chance to see enough fighting to satisfy almost any one, and not a little honor besides; but this didn't suit Farnsworth at all.

"I want to fight, not merely to look on at the war," he declared. "I want to

fight for France as the French once fought for us!"

So with Kenneth Weeks. He was a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a member of the Delta Kappa Epsilon. He was but twenty-six, yet he had written several delightful volumes of essays and stories, a number of plays. He was in the Beaux Arts, studying architecture, when the war began. He was one of the first to enlist.

Time after time he was mentioned for bravery. Throughout the long, terrific pounding to which the Foreign Legion was subjected, this young poet and philosopher from the land of Emerson fought as young Israel Putnam might have fought. He became the bomb-thrower of his squad.

Then at last came word that practically the whole American contingent in the Foreign Legion had been mustered out—by death, by wounds, by those other honors previously referred to. Theirs has been but a tiny contribution, perhaps, to the sum total of the great war's ultimate results; just as have been the contributions of those other Americans who couldn't possibly remain neutral in face of the great tradition of Lafayette. But

their contribution has been enormous in one respect. It has proved to France, at least, that republics are not always ungrateful.

"The United States of America," wrote General Joffre in one of his few published statements, "has not forgotten that the first page of the history of its independence was written with a little French blood!"

The French blood shed then was, to a large extent, the blood of seers and poets. With the same sort of blood America, to some extent, is repaying the debt.

In May of this year, 1916, a new statue to Lafayette and Washington was unveiled in Paris. On that occasion there was read a poem by Alan Seeger, in memory of the American volunteers already fallen for France:

Nay, rather, France, to you they rendered thanks—

Seeing they came for honor, not for gain—  
Who, opening to them your glorious ranks,  
Gave them that grand occasion to excel,  
That chance to live the life most free from stain,  
And that rare privilege—of dying well.

So Alan Seeger wrote. It must have been with a touch of prophecy; for he himself was killed in action on the following Fourth of July.

Seeger was a verse-writer of promise. Last October, in the *North American Review*, a poem of his was published under the title of "Champagne, 1914-1915," which has become one of the war's classics. In this the soldier poet had a vision of the peace to come, of the future banquets at which the fallen would be remembered. He wrote:

And in the wine that ripened where they fell,  
Oh, frame your lips as though it were a kiss!

### THE FOUNTAIN

I THOUGHT my garden finished. I beheld  
Each bush bee-visited; a green charm quelled  
The louder winds to music; soft boughs made  
Patches of silver dusk and purple shade—  
And yet I felt a lack of something still.

There was a little, sleepy-footed rill  
That lapsed among sun-burnished stones, where slept  
Fish, rainbow-scaled, while dragon-flies, adept,  
Balanced on bending grass.

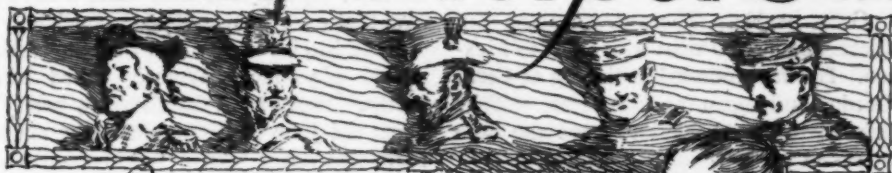
All perfect? No.  
My garden lacked a fountain's upward flow.

I coaxed the brook's young Naiad to resign  
Her meadow wildness, building her a shrine  
Of worship, where each ravished waif of air  
Might wanton in the brightness of her hair.

So here my fountain flows, loved of the wind,  
To every vagrant, aimless gust inclined,  
Yet constant ever to its source. It greets  
The face of morning, wavering windy sheets  
Of woven silver; sheer it climbs the noon,  
A shaft of bronze; and underneath the moon  
It sleeps in pearl and opal. In the storm  
It streams far out, a wild, gray, blowing form;  
While on calm days it heaps above the lake—  
Pelting the dreaming lilies half awake,  
And pattering jewels on each wide, green frond—  
Recurrent pyramids of diamond!

Harry Kemp

# The Hespers



by  
*James Francis Dwyer*



**I**N the history of our nation there are family names which, unknown in days of peace, have come to the front nobly in moments of national stress. In peaceful years the modest wearers of those names tilled the soil and tended their flocks; when the bugle called, they took up rifle and sword and marched off with the colors. They belonged to the fine class of patriots who, thinking of country and not of self, rushed to the flag in days of national peril and hewed with their sword points a niche in the Temple of Fame.

Those fighting families remind one of the rock stratum beneath soft meadow soil. Where there is no erosion, the rock remains hidden beneath the loam, but in places where flood-waters have attacked the subsoil, the rock shows an impregnable front.

In American history the Bleckenhams might be looked upon as a stratum of national granite running down through the years.

"Bleckenham?" cries the learned historian. "Bleckenham?"

Ah well, Bleckenham is very near to the real name, and, having three syllables, it does not disturb the meter of the old song that runs:

John Bleckenham rode down the lane,  
A strong hand on his bridle-rein;  
Saw six redcoats in the hay,

Fired six shots and rode away—  
Left the redcoats where they lay!

That was old John of Lexington. A good man was John! Got a redcoat with each shot, and he didn't stand round posing after the performance. He left them where they dropped on the soft hay of Fiske's Hill, and rode away in search of further adventure.

There were scores and scores of fighting Bleckenhams, and not a single fault in the stratum of granite. In fat days of peace they plowed and sowed, but when their country wanted them they went.

There was Big Bill, who got a bullet in his head at Bunker Hill, but who, while searching for some one to dress his wound, occupied his time in rounding up three prisoners. Then there was Red George Bleckenham, who became a sailor, and fought on the Wasp when she captured his majesty's ship Frolic.

A great fighter was George! He brought an orang-utan home from Banjermasin, and he wrestled with the brute, catch-as-catch-can style, in his farmyard at Dunstable. One day the orang got a half-nelson on George, and a sympathetic neighbor, thinking that Bleckenham would be killed, beat the brute off with a blacksmith's sledge. Red George decided that



his neighbor's conduct was unsportsmanlike, and he let the simian nurse his bruises while he pounded the man who had interfered.

Great people! There was Smiling Jim Bleckenham, who went with Scott to Mexico. He was wounded in the leg at Cerro Gordo, and again at Contreras, but he refused to stay behind to have the limb attended to.

"Want to see Mexico City!" said Smiling Jim, and he did.

They sawed his injured leg off in a hospital-tent erected in the middle of the Plaza Major, but he came home and won a plowing contest at Lowell!

More? Scores of them! Joe Bleckenham, Dandy Roger Bleckenham, and Monroe Bleckenham, the latter better known as Three-Horse Bleckenham, were at Pittsburg Landing with Grant. Dandy Roger was bowled over by a Confederate bullet, but when Three-Horse attempted to carry him to the rear he promptly punched his rescuer's nose and told him to go on and do what he had promised Mr. Lincoln he would do.

Still more! Peter rode with Sheridan, and young Tommy was called by Farragut "the cheekiest pup in the navy." Froud of that tongue-raking was Tommy! Told the story a thousand times after the North and South had shaken hands.

We come to 1876, an unlucky year for the Bleckenhams. Five men of the family were lost by the capsizing of the schooner Lottie off Kennebunk Beach, leaving one surviving male of the name, Major Nicholas Bleckenham, known to his battery as Old Nick, a bachelor of thirty-eight, who had settled down to a life of single blessedness in his Boston club.

A brave man was Old Nick. He knew the worth of the Bleckenham blood. He knew of old John of Lexington, of Big Bill, of Jim and Joe, of Dandy Roger, Three-Horse, and Tommy. When he heard the news of the disaster, he drank a toast to the dead, and made a vow that he would marry within a month.

The major kept his vow. He married a fine, sensible woman, and a year after his marriage a boy was born. The boy was called Kent, and it is with Kent Bleckenham that our real story begins.

Kent Bleckenham was a frail boy. He lacked physique. Women called him pretty. Pretty? A Bleckenham pretty? From old John of Lexington to the major there had never been a Bleckenham who was moderately good-looking. They were big of jaw and big of nose, tight-lipped, and stern of eye; yet Kent was pretty!

The boy's good looks annoyed Old Nick. He could have cheerfully throttled every woman who went into raptures over the boy's big eyes and white, shapely hands. He growled like a sore-eared bear as he listened to their praise.

"But he is pretty, Nicholas!" said Kent's mother. "Every person that sees him says that his eyes are wonderful."

"A boy shouldn't be pretty!" cried Old Nick. "A boy doesn't want looks. He wants strength and grit, and they don't go with prettiness. Pretty? Oh, shucks! I'll send him up to Crammond's Academy and they'll knock some of the prettiness out of him. When he gets his eyes blackened a few times he'll—"

"Nicholas!"

"You can cry out 'Nicholas' as much as you like!" snorted the major. "He's going! There was never a Bleckenham that was pretty, and I don't believe they were meant to be!"

## II

So Kent was sent to Crammond's Military Academy, to be made into a man. His mother and little Penelope Osborne were broken-hearted. Penelope's people lived next door to the Bleckenhams, and from childhood the boy and girl had been inseparable companions.

"They won't kill—kill you up there, will they?" she sobbed on the morning he kissed her good-by.

Kent's face flushed.

"Kill me?" he said. "No, no, of course they won't!"

"Father said they would," stammered Penelope. "I heard him say it to mother at lunch-time yesterday."

"Come on, Kent!" cried the major. "The cab is waiting for you."

Away went Kent with Penelope's words ringing in his ears. Kill him? Mr. Osborne had said that the boys of Crammond's Academy would kill him!

Poor Kent! Osborne's remark made a scalpel with which he dissected his soul. He was weak, he lacked physique, he was nervous. All true! The scalpel went deeper. He was more than nervous. He was afraid of things. He was a—

"No, no!" he cried. "I'm not that! I'm not!"

He had cried the words aloud, and a fat man sitting opposite looked at him sharply.

"Anything wrong?" asked the fat man.

"No, sir," answered Kent. "I was just thinking."

His thoughts turned to those others of his race. He knew the history of each. He thought over Red George, who wrestled with the orang-utan. His imagination pictured the combat—Red George, big-chested, large of limb; the orang, hairy, fierce, a little afraid of the man who wanted to wrestle with it.

He thought of Smiling Jim, who had walked to Mexico City on one leg and his nerve. Big men! They had helped to make American history. They were the little atoms that were used in the building up of the great, throbbing nation.

The train plunged onward, and more thoughts flocked into the boy's mind. He thought of Peter, the cavalryman—"best rider from the Kennebec to the St. John," they said. He recalled an old gaguerreotype in the major's study. It pictured Joe Bleckenham, Dandy Roger Bleckenham, and Three-Horse Bleckenham at Pittsburg Landing, and the three looked like vikings. He had commented to the major on their resemblance to Norse warriors.

"They were vikings," said Old Nick softly. "They just were!"

The engine screamed as it approached Kent's station, and a little shiver passed over the boy. The fat man leaned toward him.

"Going to Crammond's?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Kent, feeling certain that his traveling-companion had detected the shudder.

"They make men at Crammond's," continued the stout person. "Old Pop Crammond is a fire-eater from 'way back. Likes a fighting kid better than a little popsy-wopsy boy whose mammy spoils him. Can you fight?"

"Not—not much," answered the boy. "Good-by!"

Kent paused for a second in front of a cent-in-the-slot machine and took a hasty glimpse at his face in the strip of looking-glass.

"I wish I was like—like the other Bleckenhams!" he muttered, as he walked hurriedly toward the exit. "I'm afraid I'm a—a frightened sort of fellow!"

The fat man was right about Crammond's. It was no nursery. When Kent entered the dining-hall for his first meal, a half-suppressed laugh went round the table. A red-haired, muscular boy lifted a plate, and, holding it before his face as a lady might hold a hand-mirror, he smirked and smiled, to the great amusement of his comrades. Kent was puzzled; then Redhead brought a gleam of light into the new boy's mind by chanting softly:

"Looking in the mirror at the depot gate,  
Sweety, sweetie, is my hat on straight?"

Kent Bleckenham understood. One of the boys had seen him looking in the mirror of the cent-in-the-slot machine. Kent was getting his try-out, the try-out which all newcomers received at Crammond's. He was being rated at the hands of a red-headed Bradstreet who looked to be a fair judge of courage.

Kent flushed under the laughter of the others and dropped into a chair.

"Sweety," said Redhead, leaning toward him, "where did you come from?"

"My name is Kent Bleckenham," said Kent.

"Your name is Sweetey," cried Redhead. "I nailed it on you two minutes ago. If any one calls you anything but Sweetey, I'll punch him!"

Shades of Big Bill and Red George! Kent choked. A tremendous hate of Redhead half lifted him from his chair. Then came Crammond's voice:

"Sit down, Bleckenham! We'll say grace, boys.

"The Lord make us truly thankful for what we are about to receive," murmured old-fashioned Crammond.

Redhead, finding something appropriate to the occasion in the words of the principal, doubled up his fist and glared at Kent Bleckenham. Shades of Three-Horse and Smiling Jim! The pity of it!

"Now, Sweetey," said Redhead, as the boys filed out of the dining-hall, "we'll settle that—why, where has he gone?"

"Beat it to his room," cried a tow-headed youngster. "I saw him sneak away!"

Seven weeks of torment for Kent—hard, cold days. "Sweetey!" He wondered if the news would drift to the ears of the major or Penelope Osborne. The thought came to him at all hours, pricking him awake in the night, nagging him during study hours.

Then one day Crammond called him up into his big study. The principal seemed more kindly than usual. He put his hand upon the boy's shoulder and spoke softly.

"Bleckenham, your father has been badly hurt," he said. "A gun exploded at the fort, and he was injured." Then, as Kent stood dazed and speechless, he added: "You must be brave. If your father dies, you must remember that he died for his country!"

### III

OLD NICK died. His battery wept over him. Said one gunner to another, as the gun-carriage rumbled along:

"Game as they're made. Afraid of nothing. And hard? Gee!"

"Granite!" whispered the other. "Just granite!"

National granite! Granite that showed up from beneath the subsoil at Lexington, Bunker Hill, Saratoga, and Yorktown. Granite that didn't show till the floodwaters came roaring down.

Kent Bleckenham went back to Crammond's. He carried back a parcel, a long parcel which he unpacked carefully in his own room. In it were his father's sword and two pistols on whose butts were scratched the words: "Three-Horse Bleckenham, Fort Donelson, February 16, 1862." It also contained a long rapier, on the handle of which was a little brass plate marked: "Cerro Gordo, 1847."

Kent cried over them. He stroked them lovingly. He fondled the pistols that Three-Horse had carried, and stroked the rapier that Smiling Jim had brought back from Mexico City.

He put the sword and the rapier lengthwise upon the wall, then he hung the pistols in a horizontal position between, the four weapons thus enclosing an oblong. Afterward, he wondered what had prompted him to display them in such a fashion.

He sat upon his bed and looked at the sword and the rapier and the two pistols. The four made a frame. As the lamp burned low, a strange thought came to Kent. Through the frame the dead Bleckenhams peered at him. He saw them! A feeling partly of fear and partly of exhilaration gripped him.

He crept into bed and drew the clothes up around him. He moistened his lips and spoke in a soft whisper, his eyes upon the frame.

"I know that you are behind me," he said quietly. "I know! Every one of you, back to old John of Lexington!"

When Kent Bleckenham came into the dining-hall on the following morning, Redhead hastily swallowed a mouthful and addressed him.

"Hello, Sweetey!" he cried. "Are—"

"My name is Kent Bleckenham," said the son of Old Nick.

"Nonsense!" laughed Redhead. "I christened you Sweetie, and if—"

It was a great fight. Crammond's Academy had never witnessed a finer one. Kent had flung himself across the table, and Redhead had met the attack bravely. Pity that Old Nick couldn't see!

They upset the chairs. They swept the crockery from the tables. They slugged like two longshoremen. Pop Crammond stood open-mouthed and watched them. A soldier of the old school was Pop!

One of his lieutenants made a half-hearted attempt to separate the two, but the principal signaled him to desist. Crammond had heard of the "Sweetie" nickname, and he knew a little of the Bleckenhams. He marveled how blood shows!

"Wow!" he cried. "Wow! The terriers! Oh, the terriers!"

Redhead was tiring. He had a better physique than Kent, but physique wasn't the whole of it. Redhead's people were shopkeepers who had never fought for their country. He had no antecedents like Red George, of the Wasp, and Smiling Jim, hero of Cerro Gordo and Contreras.

A great fight! Redhead's two eyes were closed. Kent's prettiness had been swept away by a hail of punches. Redhead's clothes had been torn off him, Kent's were blood-stained.

A great fight! Down went Redhead, to come up again. Down again, up again! Who was it taught Kent Bleckenham to jab straight from the shoulder? Dandy Roger, perhaps. He was some fighter in his day. Or perhaps it was Tommy Bleckenham, the cheekiest pup old Far-ragut ever put eyes on.

"I—I give in," said Redhead, speaking from the floor.

"What is my name?" cried Kent.

"Kent Bleckenham."

#### IV

THEY carried Kent up the stairs to his own room. He was crying. In the dining-hall Pop Crammond was saying grace

and thinking over a letter which Old Nick had written him before the gun explosion. Old Nick had been afraid that he had fathered a milksop!

"Blood's blood," said Crammond, speaking to himself.

"There's plenty of it here," said his assistant.

"Eh?" said Crammond. "Oh, I didn't mean that. I meant that a boy with blood will show it sooner or later."

Kent, up-stairs, sitting on the bed, was looking at the oblong space framed by the sword, the rapier, and the two pistols.

"I'm not right yet," he stammered, as if addressing an invisible audience. "Stay with me, and—and I'll win out. I won't discredit you!"

Pop Crammond came up to see the boy later.

"Where did you get those?" he asked, pointing to the weapons.

Kent told. Pop examined them.

"I've heard of Three-Horse Bleckenham," he said. "I came from Bangor. They had a rime there which went:

"There never was a scrap  
On the face of the map  
That a Bleckenham wasn't in."

Crammond went away hurriedly after quoting the lines, leaving Kent with little thrills of pleasure running up and down his spinal column.

He came to think of those other Bleckenhams as helpers. He felt that they were behind him, an invisible army, watching him, praying for him, hoping that he might make good and do credit to the name he carried.

There were more fights. No boy at Crammond's ever won a reputation by a single victory. And with each fight the fear sprang upon Kent Bleckenham. It was a great fear, a black-winged thing that smothered his courage and made him call upon the helpers to give him strength.

In his last year he fought the great bully of Crammond's. The bully picked upon a small boy, and Kent interfered. He had to interfere. He had tried to



walk away, but he was forced to turn. Those dead Bleckenhams had never stood for tyranny!

"Leave that boy alone!" he cried. "If you don't—"

The bully didn't allow him to finish. He struck, and struck hard. Kent went to the ground, got to his feet, and rushed.

Crammond himself tells the story of that fight to his cronies when they meet on winter evenings in the big study.

"He was born a coward," old Pop would say. "Yes, sirs! A coward is often a person with an overstock of imagination, and that boy had all the imagination of his race. Up to a certain point it made him afraid, but shades of Stonewall Jackson, he was a catamount when he got past that point!"

Pop Crammond was a wise man.

Penelope Osborne heard of the great fight. Penelope, who had grown up a beautiful maiden, tapped Kent gently on the arm when he went down to Ogunquit for the summer.

"And I thought they'd kill you," she said softly.

"They would have killed me if others hadn't helped me," said Kent.

"What others?"

"I'll tell you some other day, Penelope—some day when my story won't seem nonsensical to you."

That day came sooner than Kent expected. The next morning Penelope Osborne, taking a dip, ventured too far from the shore. A snaky current seized her, tired her supple arms, and swept her seaward.

Kent Bleckenham swam after her. The little waves of the Atlantic laughed at him as he swam. Cruel little waves! They slopped over him; they jeered at him. They told him that their foam-capped brothers who were too big to come close to the shore had taken the girl he loved.

"She's gone!" they cried. "Turn and swim back, or we'll get you! Turn, you fool, and swim for the shore!"

Kent heard them. Old Pop Crammond

was right. Imagination makes many men cowards. They see and hear things of which the stolid folk know nothing.

"Fool!" cried the waves. "Fool! Poor fool!"

"Help!" murmured Kent. "Red George! Roger! Father!"

Pride of race! Was it Red George, the sailor, who made him swim? Or Tommy, Farragut's pet on the old Hartford? Tommy swam five miles when he was knocked overboard at the bombardment of Fort Jackson.

Kent thought that Tommy and Red George were swimming close to him. When the waves jeered at him, they whispered in his ears and gave him courage.

"Fool!" hissed the waves. "We'll get you soon! Go back, fool! Go back!"

"Keep at it," came a soft whisper. "You're a Bleckenham! National granite!"

Kent reached Penelope. Weary, dazed, blinded, he gathered up her unconscious form and started back for the shore.

On the warm sands he told her of the helpers. He told of the fight with Red-head, of the other fights, and how behind him always were the men of his race.

"They were near this morning as I swam after you," he said. "You see I—I was born a coward, and they've tried to help me out."

"Kent, you're the bravest boy in all the world!" she said.

"No, I'm not, Penelope," he answered; "but it's great to have ancestors who were big, clean, courageous Americans, as my ancestors were."

She kissed him on the cheek, and the world became rose-colored for Kent.

## V

AND then one day in April, 1898, war sprang upon the land. Kent, at home now, rushed into his mother's boudoir.

"War!" he cried. "War!"

"War?" she gasped.

"Yes, yes! And I'm going, mother! I'm going!"



"You?" she cried. "You? Why, I—I—"

"Don't stop me, mother," he said gently, taking her two hands and drawing her toward him. "Don't try to stop me. I can't tell you everything, but I've—I've got to go. You know they went when their country called—every one of them. There was never a Bleckenham that didn't follow the flag when his country wanted him."

Kent went. He marched aboard a transport bound for the Philippines. Bands were playing and flags flying. Penelope and Kent's mother wept, but the boy held his head up and walked proudly. He felt close to those others, those helpers who had stood by him.

National granite! American granite! Ready to show itself when the flood attacks. Bleckenhams, and a hundred thousand families like the Bleckenhams! We have them!

## VI

It was hot, fearfully hot. A yellow sun in the zenith stabbed the jungle with a million lances of flame. Patches of inky shadow huddled beneath the thick creeper-masses.

Seven men stumbled through the jungle growth. Six were dark, swarthy men, stooped, haggard; the seventh was a man in the uniform of the United States army. He was a boy more than a man. He was only twenty. It was Kent Bleckenham.

He slipped and fell. One of the six prodded him viciously with the barrel of a rifle, and he climbed wearily to his feet. Again he fell; again he was roused roughly. The boy was weak, but the six, who held him prisoner had no sympathy. They hated him.

Their leader, one-eyed, pock-marked, crime-seared, had struck him in the face half a dozen times during the day. Once Kent had torn his left hand free from the thongs that bound his wrists, and a swollen nose constantly reminded the Filipino of his lack of caution.

"Peeg!" he screamed, each time his

fingers rubbed the injured nasal organ. "Peeg! I will kill you for that blow!"

"Does it hurt, you scoundrel?" quizzed Kent. "I'd give a few dollars for the opportunity of landing another punch on it!"

A brave Kent, now. He walked boldly, although trussed like a woodcock. His face was tanned and strong, somewhat like the face of Three-Horse Bleckenham shown in the old daguerreotype taken long ago.

On and on—no rest! Tramp, tramp, tramp! Somewhere behind them, in the great sea of vines and tangled creepers, a detachment of United States infantry was following swiftly, and the six had to hurry.

The Filipino leader wanted the prisoner to write a false message which would throw the pursuing column off their track, but Kent would not write. He laughed at them. He was sure of himself now.

"Don't let him sleep a single moment till he obeys me," said the leader of the six.

"Good!" murmured the men.

No sleep for Kent—not a wink! On the first night he closed his eyes for an instant, and the leader, watching him closely, picked a live coal from the fire and dropped it between the palms of the prisoner's hands.

"If you're going to bed, take a light with you!" he said.

The others screamed with laughter. The leader was a wit. He was devilishly funny. "Take a light with you," he had said, and how funny it was to see the tired American shaking the coal from between his palms that were brought close together by the cords!

"Write what I tell you to write," said the leader, on the second night.

"Never!"

"We'll see, fool!"

Three nights—four nights—five! No sleep for Kent. The sentries saw to that. They imitated their leader. They waited ready to do what he had done with the live coal.

"Take a light with you!" they would

yell, and then scream with laughter as Kent Bleckenham flung the burning coal from him.

The leader cursed Bleckenham's obstinacy. Coming swiftly on their tracks was the pursuing column. He sensed it, a snaky Nemesis winding after him through the jungle.

"Keep him awake!" he screamed. "Don't let him close his eyes!"

They didn't. They were born baiters of men. A pity Old Nick Bleckenham didn't live to hear the story of those nights!

Six nights! The leader knocked Kent down and kicked him viciously. The leader was afraid, much afraid. He felt that the pursuers were at his heels. Close behind him were the stern-jawed, hard-marching, khaki-clad men whom he feared and hated. Again and again he brought his right shoe against the ribs of his prisoner.

"They'll pay you for this," said Kent, "to-morrow or the next day! The United States pays her debts, you hound!"

The one-eyed leader spat upon Bleckenham.

"To-morrow you will be in hell!" he screamed. "To-morrow you die—at sunrise! *Si!* I will teach you!"

"And the soldiers of my country will catch you before sunset and stretch your neck with a few yards of hemp," cried Kent.

A lonely night for Kent! Somewhere behind him in the black jungle were his companions. Away, away, leagues and leagues to the northeast, were Penelope and his mother. He recalled the day when Penelope had kissed him, the day on which he had told her of the helpers.

He thought over those Bleckenhams whose example had made him stiffen his jaw and remain silent through hours of torture. They had shown him the way.

"All we want is the example," he said softly. "That is why the nation is big. We try to live up to the deeds of our ancestors. Why, all those boys who are trying to rescue me had ancestors who

were like my ancestors. Young Frank Sheldon had five uncles in the Civil War; Harry Stephens had three, and Bill Leary had six!"

He sat pondering over the discovery. It was example that made the weaklings stiffen their spinal columns and become men. The big men of the past—Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, Clay, Webster, Henry, and a hundred others—were the shining stars upon which the rank and file fixed their eyes and strode forward.

"Aye, aye," muttered Kent, "it's good to know what they did! If old John or Smiling Jim or Three-Horse hadn't lived, this yellow hound might have broken my nerve!"

His musings were interrupted by the sentry.

"You are to be shot at dawn," he whispered.

"That's all right," said Kent.

The sentry was silent for a moment; then he glanced at his sleeping companions and leaned closer.

"Perhaps you might like to send a message to America—a little farewell message," he whispered. "There is a ring on your finger, *señor*, and for the ring I will take a letter and mail it from Lubungan."

The faces of his mother and Penelope came up before Kent's eyes. He saw them as they had stood together waving to him on the day the transport sailed.

"How do I know you'll mail it?" he asked.

The sentry laughed.

"I like the ring," he said, and added in a whisper: "I am going to desert when the day breaks. I know a trail that will never be found by your countrymen."

"You could earn a score of rings," said Kent quietly. "You—"

"No," interrupted the other. "I cannot release you. Write the letter if you wish—that is all."

Kent wrote the letter—wrote it to Penelope. The sky was yellowing with the first faint blush of the dawn. There seemed to be no hope, so he told the girl,

and asked her to tell his mother. It didn't matter. Life was short, anyhow, and he was going out for the flag.

"Hurry!" said the sentry. "Hurry! The ring—quick! They're waking!"

## VII

LET us follow the letter. The sentry deserted, and made his way to Lubungan, where a sweetheart lived. To her he gave the ring, which she admired greatly.

"Tell me how you got it," she said, and he told.

"And have you sent the letter to his sweetheart?"

"No," he said. "What does it matter? They were to shoot him an hour after I ran away. If she doesn't get the letter, she might still think him alive, and be happy."

The girl considered a moment; then she thrust out her hand.

"Give me the letter," she said. "It is better for her to know the worst. Before I met you, Pedro, I loved a man who went away. If I knew that he was dead, I could be happy now. Give it to me, and I will put it in the mail."

Over the rocking Pacific went the little farewell letter, Frisco, and a swift train waiting to carry it eastward. In old Boston a girl waiting for news.

It came one wonderful morning in September. The old postman handed it to Penelope with a smile.

"Morning, Miss Penelope," he said. "A letter from the islands. Tough business down there now!"

"Thank you, John!"

Penelope took the letter to a little closed-in porch, and, sitting down, opened it. Tough business! She read it twice, thrice, the words leaping at her as if annoyed at being kept so long in the envelope. Tough business! It dropped from her hand to the floor, and Penelope buried her face in the cushions and wept.

Some one shook her gently.

"Go away," she murmured. "Go away!"

"Penelope! Penel—"

She was on her feet in an instant. She gave a great cry of joy, and sprang into the arms of Kent Bleckenham.

"Oh, Kent!" she sobbed. "Oh, Kent! The letter! The letter! Oh, Kent! Kent!"

Kent Bleckenham's eyes fell upon the letter in the pool of sunshine. "Shades of Red George!" he cried. "Did one of those dogs really keep his word?"

He told her all, then. They had stood him up at dawn as they had threatened.

"Will you write?" asked the leader.

"No!" said Kent.

And then—but let us hear it in Kent's own words:

"I was dazed, Pen—out of my mind, girl. They stood me up for the grand finale, and just then I heard a yell. I looked up at the hill in front of me, and, girly, girly, I thought that every Bleckenham that ever lived was racing down the hill to rescue me! Down they charged, Pen, and I yelled in answer to their yells. Why, I called 'em by their names. What do you think of that? Called 'em Red George and Three-Horse and Dandy Roger! Then a little hot needle touched my shoulder, and I dropped.

"When I came to my senses there were United States soldiers round me, and then I discovered something, Pen. I discovered something big. Behind us are not only our own relatives, but our own big nation, Pen—the fellows whose ancestors fought with our ancestors to keep the good old flag flying!"

"Oh, Kent!" sobbed the girl. "Oh, my dear Kent! I'm so happy that—oh, Kent, what is the matter with your hands?"

"Nothing much, Pen," said Kent, gently drawing his right hand from her. "Those fellows kept me awake by dropping little hot coals into my hands, but they're nearly all right now. I wouldn't—why, girly, don't cry!"

But Miss Penelope Osborne had flung herself forward and was sobbing her little heart out on the broad breast of the man she loved.



## by Harriet Whitney Symonds

**N**O doubt we acted rashly in the Lizard Gap affair—Ferd, Regina, and I; but three fallible mortals whose entire household outfit is occupying two paid-by-the-hour moving-vans, and who suddenly find themselves bereft of a habitation, may easily be led into rash procedures.

It was the Forlorn Hope that landed us in the mess—a bit of property which regularly swallowed all our spare dollars in taxes, and which we had never been able either to rent or to sell. As an anchorage for ourselves it had never appealed to us, until need came to must during a panicky period in our fortunes.

A bleak day of reckoning had come to us, when Ferd was not yet strong enough to return to the money-mart after a run of rheumatic fever, and I had had the ill luck to lose my niche in the public library. Regina, our housekeeping sister, assured us that we must either take refuge in the Forlorn Hope or stand upon the street-corner, each provided with a tin cup to catch what pennies might come our way. She added that though the latter course would doubtless be the more diverting, ancestral claims to respectability pointed to the former.

Regina being the family Mede and Persian, Ferd proceeded to negotiate with a moving company, on a credit basis, while Redge and I set to packing with sorrow in our hearts, huck towels on our heads, and our late landlord nosing around to see what damage we had done the premises.

Summer being in the fiery-furnace period, scarcely any one was moving, yet the big new "to rent" card came out of the front window before its outermost edge was tarnished by a day's grime, and the rugs of the inmoving flatters were in the hall before our last chair was loaded in the vans. In helpless, bundled-out indignation, Regina and I fled to the front yard, adjusting our hats as we ran. We met Ferd at the gate, red and moist with hurrying back from the agents'—whither he had gone for the key—to tell us that the Forlorn Hope was rented. A month's rent had been paid—the money was now in Ferd's pocket—and the new tenants were already in full possession!

Regina blanched to the pallid lemon-green of celery-tips. Her eyes grew tragic.

"Oh, why," she moaned, "after we have squandered our youth in pleading



with the public to become our tenant, and have met only scorn and rebuff, does it now wrest our Forlorn Hope from under our noses?"

"Don't let's waste time on 'conundrums that haven't any answer, sis," urged Ferd. "We'd better hump around and try to rent another flat with the money we got out of the deal."

"Rent another flat!" Regina's inflection marked her rating of Ferd's intelligence as "very low." "He seems to fancy," she declared, addressing the adjacent buildings, "that flats are lying around underfoot like cobblestones! Why, the people that have come in here just *snatched* these rooms. They had walked and walked until they were black in the face, for there's nothing to be had at this time of year. Besides, would the moving-men stand here cooking and broiling in this sun while we flat-hunted?"

"Well, I'm cooking and broiling," declared Ferd. "Let's go back in and study up something."

"We can't go back in. Two men are in there with a bucket of paste; they're going to paper."

"I know what!" I contributed. "Let's rent the place these people have left."

"Rent the moon!" derided Regina. "They've been living with one of their mothers-in-law, in a heap, until she all but ran them out; that's why they grabbed our flat in such a hurry. I gathered it from what I heard them say."

"You'll have to tell us what to do, lady." The boss of the vans now addressed Regina, respectfully, but with the stanch independence of one who wasn't collecting his pay from *us*. "If we have to keep the stuff on the vans overnight, we gotta charge storage on it."

"Listen to that—and we with not a penny to spare! Ferd"—turning her great eyes upon that unhappy youth—"can't you fish up a single idea?"

"One small, runty one," rejoined Ferd unhelpfully; "the old Hardy Bushell place."

Up rose Regina's drooping head like a newly sprinkled tomato-plant, and in five minutes the vans were headed toward a point thirty-five miles from the madding crowd's ignoble strife.

## II

THE old Hardy Bushell place was a family bequest from a distant relative who had long ago drifted from ties of kinship and established a hermitage in the wilderness. We had not as yet seen our inheritance, the deed to which had been forwarded us at the time of the relative's death, in the spring.

At that period Ferd, in the visionary mists of early convalescence, had wanted us to go and live on the place and raise garden-truck. I, dreaming of primroses and mushrooms, had favored the notion; but Regina, after receipt of the Lizard Gap postmaster's letter in answer to our inquiries, had smitten our sylvan air-castle into slivers.

"The house is little," Mr. Gunn had written, "but would be good to live in if it wasn't so leaky and damp like. It sets sort of low down in the holler, and 'most everybody that lives there in the fall of the year has chills. There's a right smart bunch of land goes with it, and it's good corn-growin' land."

The latter recommendation had proved no lure to Regina, who had at once given out flatly and finally that if Ferd and I wished to dwell in a leaky cabin in a chill-engendering hollow, where earwigs and hairy spiders abounded, the privilege was ours, but to her mind the jungles of Africa held greater appeal as a summer resort.

This, however, had occurred before we became homeless waifs. The old Hardy Bushell place, which, in our arrogance we had all but forgotten, now glimmered through the fog of tribulation like a cheery shore-light through an ocean mist.

We tried to time our arrival at Lizard Gap Crossing, by trolley-car, a little ahead of the motor-vans conveying our

furniture, but the latter beat us. A hemp-headed boy, hop-scotching by himself near the crossing where we alighted, asked us, grinning, if we were the folks that had come to live at the old Bushell place.

"'Cuz if you air," he enlightened us, "your truck's gone there. The men was askin' where at was the ole Bushell place, an' I showed 'em, an' then I allowed I better wait 'round till you come, so's to show you where it's at."

We seized the offered guidance joyously, and another five minutes served to land us on the docks of our isle of hope.

The van men, having disposed our household equipment in neat stacks among the ragweed and horse-nettles that flooded the dooryard, had disappeared like specters at the midnight chime.

"And from whence," besought Ferd of the universe, "is the key of our Utopia supposed to be obtained?"

The hemp-headed boy grinned.

"I reckon you want the door-key. Shall I run up the hill an' git it off the old lady?"

"Pray do," urged Ferd. "If our door-key is to be found on any old lady, and you succeed in getting it off, your pocket shall be the heavier by a silver quarter."

During the boy's absence we made external examination of our new abode, which appeared to be merely a plain, old-fashioned cottage, set far down the slope of a hill. Regina admitted that its appearance was scarcely as earwiggy as she had feared, and we were making quite merry as we mapped out a free and easy picnic sojourn within its shelter until fall, when Mercury returned, keyless, with the tidings that there wasn't nobody home up the hill.

"How, then," demanded Ferd, "do we reach the land of El Dorado?"

"Dunno," returned Hemp-Locks, practically; "but if you wanta git inside this yere house to-day, you gotta just naturally prize the boards off'n the cellar

winder an' git in thataway. Then you kin go up an' open some o' the doors from inside."

The logic of this suggestion being patent, the prizing off of the boards followed. With the aid of Hemp-Locks and two passing teamsters, we managed to tow our household appurtenances under cover, and the garnet oversplashings of sunset found the Woodleys no longer exiles and wayfarers.

### III

AT our wistaria-twined side portico, early the next morning, there appeared a tall, clear-eyed young fellow in the garb of labor, with a neighborly smile upon his face, a pint pitcher of cream in one hand, and our door-key in the other.

"Good morning! I hope—" he was beginning as Ferd opened the door.

Just then Regina came out of the kitchen, and he apparently lost track of what it was he hoped. Regina had been frying bacon for breakfast—an occupation that always turns her cheeks to pink chenille. She had on her pale-gray kimono sprinkled with lilac fans and rose-colored butterflies. But for the long, sharp fork she held, she might have been mistaken for young Aurora who is supposed to wake the dawn.

I think it was the scorchy smell from the kitchen that jogged up the young man's wits at last.

"Buzz Dodson came along early this morning and told Mrs. Weatherly about the trouble you had getting in yesterday," he related. "She hustled me right over to bring you the front key and some cream for your coffee."

"How delicious of Mrs. Weatherly!" sparkled Regina, who hates black coffee, adding, with gracious jocularity: "I trust her duties as keeper of the key have not been heavy?"

"Not very," the young man assured her; "but Mrs. Weatherly thinks it sinful to be easy in her mind. She's watched and worried over that key like a mother, but yesterday, when you came, she hap-

pened to be making calls, and I'd had to go to town. She's still in something of a pucker about your—your—"

"Oh, tell her we enjoyed breaking into our own house," smiled Regina. "It was a thrilling adventure, to us. We are the Woodleys, from St. Louis. Our plan of coming to our summer cottage was sudden, and we—we didn't stop to notify any one, as no doubt we should have done. But we find it in better condition than we expected; perhaps you have repaired it from time to time. I presume you work for Mrs. Weatherly?"

"After a fashion—yes, ma'am." There was a shimmer of straight, white teeth. "I look after things on the farm up yonder. I am Rollin Ashlock. I've tinkered up the place some, but I see the dooryard and lawn need a good going over. If you'd like it attended to—"

"Thanks!" Regina had slipped on her lady-of-the-manor air. "If Mrs. Weatherly can spare you—"

"I'll start in Monday morning, Miss Woodley."

Mr. Ashlock, lifting a weather-worn hat, backed off through the wet ragweed, and Regina thoughtfully returned to the frying of the breakfast bacon.

#### IV

THE trolley-pole of the car that sped Ferd to his city labors in the pinkness of the next Monday morning had barely spun itself into a slender thread in the distant glow before Mr. Ashlock was at the back door with a scythe, a grubbing-hoe, a peck of marrowfat peas, a curious, warty vegetable with a long, curled neck, and a dozen little round sugar-melons.

"Mrs. Weatherly is a great deal too lavish with her garden stuff!" protested Regina in dismay.

"Oh, Mrs. Weatherly isn't in on this deal," explained Mr. Ashlock carelessly. "She lets me run the garden and dispose of the truck as I like; and there's such a surplus this year, it's a regular nuisance."

"You could take it to town and sell it," pointed out Regina thriftily. "These

melons would bring you five cents apiece in the city."

"Yes, ma'am." Mr. Ashlock took up his scythe, then laid it down again. "Could you use some marrow squashes, if I wheeled over a barrow-load? And tomatoes—do let me bring you a basket of Imperial Garnets, Miss Woodley!"

My sister Regina is kindly disposed toward her race, but she was raised by an aunt of ours who held peculiar views. This aunt had drilled into Regina the belief that a young woman should enclose herself in plate-armor in the presence of any man showing a tendency to come out of the lowly valleys of humility where he naturally belongs. In the case of a man of uninvestigated credentials, the armor should be doubly riveted.

I could almost hear the clanking of steel, now, even before she said, in a voice of frozen cream:

"As Mrs. Weatherly allows you to dispose of the vegetables, I will take the squashes and tomatoes, and what other things we need from time to time, if you will kindly keep an itemized account of everything until the end of the month."

He picked up his scythe and went after the weedy lawn, a long, clear laugh bubbling back with an undercurrent of merry derision.

"I'm so thankful you didn't call him 'my good man,'" said I to Regina.

She rebuked me by walking into the house in majestic silence.

During the time of putting our lawn and dooryard in order—which period became in some way rather extended—the Woodleys waxed fat upon a vegetable diet of a quality and flavor like unto nothing ever before experienced by that family. In Regina's brow, however, care had stitched a vertical worry-plait, and the constant need of keeping her armor on straight was embittering her disposition.

One day I found her glowering over a great heap of roasting-ears which she was husking, with an absolutely tragic air, on the back porch.

"I came near giving them to a cow that was in the lane," she remarked. "If we have to get used to spaghetti and canned stuff again, it's as well to begin at once!"

I turned the observation over in my mind, seeking light.

"The latter part sounds like a good epigram," I replied, "but I don't quite catch the point. Why should you favor a cow above your own family?"

"It means," said Regina bluntly, "that I've put the lid down hard and tight on any more vegetable offerings coming down the hill. That man has driven me to desperate measures at last. Winifred, you heard the strict orders I gave him to keep an itemized account of the vegetables we had from him. Well, when I wanted to settle for them, he didn't know any more about an account than a blessed calf! He merely laughed at my persistence, and said that a few dinky vegetables weren't worth bothering about. By my own approximate calculations, we've had seventy-nine sugar-melons, twenty-five cantaloups, two bushels of tomatoes, twenty dozen roasting-ears, pecks and pecks of early potatoes, a tub or two of squashes, and I couldn't tell you the number of egg-plants and peas!"

"But he said—"

"Fiddle for what he said! That's of no consequence, since he ignores and defies my orders. And it's not alone in the matter of garden stuff that he does so. He dodges all my efforts to talk business in the most trifling way. He said the lawn work was only a neighborly chore—just let it wait, there might be other jobs that would need doing!"

"Well," I shrugged, "if he *likes* to work for nothing more than the pleasure of being here—"

"People may like what isn't good for them," hinted Regina darkly, then veered back to her grievance. "Half an hour after I had talked myself dizzy explaining to him that he couldn't be allowed to fling his entire garden upon us

without any pecuniary return, he came prancing down the hill with all these roasting-ears!"

"Mighty fine roasting-ears they are, too," I commented. "I hope you didn't—"

"Well, I just did!" bounced Regina. "I forbade him to bring so much as a wax-bean to these premises again."

"Oh, well," I prophesied cheerfully, "he won't heed you."

"He will," avowed Regina, and I now noted that her grouchiness was of mixed ingredients. "His persistence was so maddening that I felt I must put my foot down, and I—I planked it a little harder than I meant to; but he needn't have turned so pokery all at once, and begged my pardon so viciously, and gone stubbing up the hill so churlishly!"

"H-m, no," I agreed acridly. "He ought to have let you do all the messy-mean little stunts you could invent, and then have thanked you for walking over him! I'm glad he showed you he had some teeth of his own."

"It—it wasn't right," drooped Regina desolately, "to let him put us under obligations that way!"

"And why wasn't it, if he wanted to? 'Tisn't likely he expected any return outside of a little friendliness, and why shouldn't he have it? In all the years of your life, which foot up twenty-four and a half, did you ever meet a more likable man, with a cheerfuler disposition, or clearer eyes, or an honest expression, or a better-shaped nose, or half so jolly a smile?"

"N-no; but we can't accept—"

"And now," I thumped ahead, "you've snipped off all his nice, fresh buds of good-will and neighborly kindness with the scissors of some twisted-up old notion of dignity imbibed from Aunt Wisdom Harkins. And your helpless relatives can eat husks until their elbows are sharp—they, poor things, having no dignity to keep up!"

And I hoped, as I observed my sister biting worriedly and reflectively at a



twist of pink corn-silk, that I had planted a seed or two of homely logic.

## V

THE week that followed, barren as to table comfort, was otherwise as flavorless as a dried-up potato. The spirits of the Woodleys drooped, and Regina's eyes grew tragic.

And then came the cataclysm!

To Buzz Dodson's mother it was given to snatch the rosy flounce of illusion from the plain gown of our Arcadian home. As I returned from an afternoon ramble, I beheld her waddling out of our lane gate. I should never have believed that an inoffensive little woman like that, with a knob of hempy hair and a mild, long nose, could possibly have riddled my poor sister's temper into the snarl of tags and tatters in which I found it.

"Don't ever laud that man's perfections to me again, Winifred Woodley!" she flung feverishly at me from the back porch, as I steered into hearing. "Don't expect me to be dazzled by the quality of his vegetables, or the shape of his nose! Do you know?"—her voice grew hollow—"that he could put us in jail this minute?"

"Mercy me! What for?"

"Because"—still more hollowly—"we broke into his house, you and Ferd and I, with Buzz Dodson's help—*broke* into it, you understand, and are living in it in open lawlessness!"

"His house! But isn't this the old—"

"It's the old *Bushell* place, all right, but it isn't the old *Hardy* Bushell place; they're different. That woman that was here—Mrs. Dodson—called to see if we'd rent *our* house to her cousin—Jeems Kite, she called him; and my telling her that we expected to stay in it ourselves until fall started the thread that ripped the whole abominable blunder open from top to hem! She says our moving-men asked her Buzz where the old Bushell place was, and Buzz naturally pointed out this place. Ours is

about a mile away, in a hollow. The house is a two-room log, and is, I gather, more earwiggy and leaky even than we thought. Any one who lives in it in the fall is sure to have the 'ager,' but she says 'Jeems 'll resk it for a spell.' And for the past month we've been *squatters*, Winifred—we, the Woodleys, of St. Louis—squatters on the premises of Rollin Ashlock!"

"Well," I plunged into the freshest of words, "Mr. Ashlock has known it all along. Why should he want to put us in jail *now*?"

"Oh, my poor, saucer-brained child! Who said he *wanted* to put us in jail?" Regina flung up her arms in a Mount Pelée explosion and went to ramping up and down the porch like a beautiful, angry tiger. "He doesn't; he's bestowing charity on us!"

"At least, that's considerate in him; but why—"

"Oh, yes, why?" she flouted me. "Why did he leave me under a ridiculous misapprehension that led me into all manner of absurdities? Mrs. Dodson says that he knew we'd got into his house by mistake, but he didn't want to hurt our feelings by telling us of it, thinking that perhaps we hadn't much money. 'He's open-handed to poor folks,' she says. It appears, by the way, he could have sent a squad of men to do in a day the work that took him two weeks or more. He doesn't have to look at a scythe crosswise—Mrs. Dodson's words—if he doesn't choose; but he likes farm work—thinks it's good for him."

"Well, then," I pondered, "I can't see just where our grievance is."

"Do you realize, Winifred, that he allowed us, in our raw ignorance, to become parasites, living on his bounty—that he simply swamped us under obligations which we didn't even recognize as such? Do you perceive that the garden things he's been hurling at us, instead of representing mistaken offerings of friendship, were bestowed in the spirit of donations to the worthy poor? Am I

to continue gathering up the alms he flings me, and gambol joyously on without a protest?"

"I don't know that you need gambol," I conceded; "but aren't you a little unreasonable, sis, in being angry because he didn't put us in jail? Wasn't it neighborly—"

Regina's arms waved like windmill sails.

"Was it single-minded and ingenuous to leave us in the dark? Does true chivalry pelt you with favors that jolt the breath out of you? Does it impose the humiliation of allowing you to go on living rent-free on its property after you have expressed some opinions that—"

"That you had no business to hold," I chopped in.

"That young man must be made to grasp the fact," Redge bristled along, "that the Woodleys are not charity subjects for him to practise on! I'm going up the hill as straight as I know how, to take him a month's rent, no matter if we were going to buy curtains with it; and I shall convince him that—that—"

Off she went, across lots, with her head up like a determined cow who has snatched your last cabbage-plant. And a gray fog of dissatisfaction gathered about me as I went in to darn stockings. Rollin Ashlock's management of a peculiar situation had perhaps been open to criticism, but Rollin Ashlock's presence had certainly been cheering, and his roasting-ears were matchless.

## VI

SUDDEN atmospheric changes irritate me. When, therefore, my martial sister, upon her return, came tripping blithely to my door and peeped in as blushing coy as sweet sixteen with its first beau, I darned stolidly on, as she purred out:

"Win, dear, Mr. Ashlock is on the front porch. He's going to stay to tea, and I thought maybe some chicken-salad—"

"When do we go to jail?" I demanded acidly, whereat she laughed in glee.

"Oh, we can stay in his house indefinitely; at least you and Ferd can. He asked me, on the way over, to go shares in his other house—the one on the hill. It's a lovely place, smothered in roses, and Mrs. Weatherly is the quaintest old dear of a housekeeper—been with him for years, so she bosses him a little—"

"And the charitable donations?"

"They weren't really charity, because he says our place, in spite of its drawbacks, is worth as much as this one, on account of the fine farm-land. He'd be glad to make an exchange; he wants to talk to Ferd this evening, and all of us, about trading. And I thought some chicken-salad—"

"Wait!" I waved a determined stocking at her. "No salad until I'm out of this new fog. Estates being equal, as you say, I have yet to be told why, upon finding that a family had lawlessly seized upon his property, he humbly handed over the key to them without a word on the subject of rentals!"

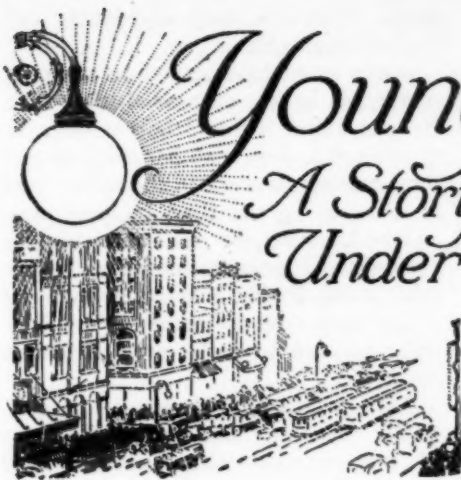
"Oh, that!" Regina giggled happily. "He would soon have confessed why, but he didn't say anything at first, partly because I dazzled him—at least, he says so—but chiefly because he saw a chance to make an expiation, and of course we wouldn't have allowed it if we had known the facts. He'd been feeling guilty, that morning he came with the key, about a poor family he'd robbed of a home, and when he found that *we* were the family—"

"How did he find that we were the family, and how had he robbed us?"

"He remembered Ferd—he was in Filler & Fisher's office when Ferd was there asking for the key; and when he found us here, he thought it would even things up if he let us keep his house, because he'd got us into the mess—"

"He'd got us into the mess?"

"Yes—by renting our place in town for his sister's family; he'll tell you all about it. And I thought that as I'm engaged to him now, and as he's going to stay to tea, some chicken-salad—"



# Young Blood

## A Story of Life Under the White Lights

by Fred Jackson

Author of  
"A Full House," etc.

### SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED

**B**UCKY ROLLINS, undergraduate at Elmhaven, is summoned to New York to hear the reading of his great-uncle's will. He takes with him six classmates—known to their friends as Reddy Wheeler, Simeon the Monk, Alonzo, Dicky Mason, Jimmy Barrister, and Gordon Prime. Arrived at the office of Gladwin & Kent, counsel to the late Chauncey Raymond Rollins, Bucky receives the wholly unexpected information that he has inherited property worth about five million dollars. This sudden good fortune—if it can be called good fortune, in view of the results—throws young Rollins entirely off his balance. Always a good-natured, irresponsible boy, he draws five thousand dollars from Mr. Gladwin, and plunges into a career of wild extravagance with his six companions. They hire a suite of rooms at the Mammoth Hotel, and outfit themselves regardless of cost. They pick up seven show-girls, and wine and dine them at gay resorts. Bucky's partner in these revelries is a blond beauty named Sylvia Nelson, and he becomes madly infatuated with her. He buys her expensive hats and jewelry, which she accepts with pretended reluctance; and his five thousand dollars is soon exhausted.

### CHAPTER IX

#### THE SPENDERS

**T**HREE days after his first visit to Gladwin's office, Bucky reported there again, to settle the details of his inheritance and to draw more money. Gladwin smilingly presented him with a stack of bank-books, revealing sums to his credit in each of half a dozen banks, and kindly counseled him not to "go it" too strongly.

The three days had made a big difference in Bucky. He looked different, to begin with, because he was paying fabulous prices for everything that he wore, from his boots up. More than that, he really was different. There is sure to be a vital change in a man when he is trans-

formed in the twinkling of an eye from an ordinary, unimportant college boy—one of thousands—into the heir to five million dollars.

For twenty-two years Bucky had been like anybody else—an average young fellow, one of the common herd. Now he was an aristocrat, and a moneyed one at that. He was *somebody*. People toadied to him, put themselves out to serve him, gave in to him, spoiled him.

An enterprising reporter, tipped off by Sylvia Nelson and the press-agent of "Little Miss Muffet," wrote a big story about his wealth, his extravagance, his infatuation for Beauty Nelson. The news traveled along Broadway, and he became a person of importance on the third or fourth night of his stay in town.

\* Copyright, 1916, by Fred Jackson—This story began in the October number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

It was all very gratifying to Bucky, of course. It's always gratifying to be an individual—something more than everybody else. It's gratifying to be recognized, pointed out, discussed. It's pleasant to have the waiters scurry about and kotow all over the place when you walk into a restaurant or café.

It's exciting to have the comedian of the biggest hit in town mention your name from the stage. The comedian in "Little Miss Muffet" did it about Bucky Rollins the fourth night. He said to Beauty Nelson:

"Look at her! She's stuck up just because she knows a millionaire. Oh, you Bucky!"

Bucky couldn't help carrying himself with something of an air. Even Reddy and the rest had adopted a new attitude toward him, though he tried his best to act exactly as he had acted before. His position was much like that of a crown prince. Although he had done nothing to merit his good fortune, he felt compelled to bear it with dignity.

So a certain lofty magnificence marked his celebrations, especially after his bankbooks fell into his hands. The cost was never counted. Anything that was worth doing was done, and done *right*.

Our seven young gentlemen from Elmhaven lived like seven kings. They kept cabs waiting by the hour, so that they need not be put to the inconvenience of looking for vehicles when they were needed. Messengers carried notes, flowers, candy, or fruit at any time of the day or night. No cigars or wine or cigarettes were too costly for them.

In the way of apparel, nothing was beyond their reach. Barbers came up from down-stairs to shave them, manicurists to keep their nails in order. No matter where they went or what they did, they left a stream of gold behind them.

It was a wonderful adventure, the whole spree, and one they would have liked to make last indefinitely; but all of them save Bucky had folks at home to account to, and it behooved them to be

wary. Therefore, they decided to call five nights enough.

Bucky could have stayed on alone, of course, but he was disinclined to do that. He was afraid it would be too dull, for Sylvia had to devote all her evenings and three matinées a week to the noble cause of cheering up the tired business man, and he knew no one else upon whom he could depend for companionship. On the other hand, Reddy Wheeler pointed out to him that with his money it would be quite possible to make even Elmhaven endurable.

"We could take a big house," suggested Mr. Wheeler, "and fix it up as a sort of private club—with bedrooms, you know, a gymnasium, a rathskeller, card-rooms, and everything. We could put up visitors from New York whenever we liked, and give parties to the theatrical troupes that come to Elmhaven—and out of class hours we could pull off all sorts of stunts."

"My word, the kid's clever!" commented Dicky Mason.

"We could call it a fraternity," went on Reddy, "and limit the membership to seven—or any number we pleased."

"I'm darned if we couldn't!" cried Gordon Prime enthusiastically.

"Like the idea?" asked Reddy of Bucky.

Bucky grinned.

"I think I *do*!" answered he.

To tell the plain truth, it seemed to him little less than an inspiration. His days in Elmhaven had been uneventful after the novelty of college life had worn off. It amused him tremendously to think of startling the natives—of waking up the old town.

"We could call ourselves 'The Owls,'" went on Reddy, going into details; "because owls are stupid and blind all day and only wake up at night. Also, owls are wise!"

"Hear, hear!" cried Simeon the Monk.

"And we'll have signet-rings made with an owl's head on them to seal our letters with," suggested Alonzo.



"My idea," said Jimmy Barrister, "would be to take some good colored servants right along back with us from here. An old colored mammy to do the cooking—"

"Corn pone and waffles and fried chicken *à la* Maryland," put in Simeon the Monk, smacking his lips at the thought.

"And a boy to press clothes and black boots and run errands," said Bucky. "And a valet and barber, and a butler—a regular butler to mix drinks!"

"This is the life, this is the life, this is the life for me!" sang Dicky Mason gaily.

"And a colored maid for the girls when they come down for a week-end," put in Gordon Prime.

"And some chauffeurs," added Alonzo. "We'll have to have our own cars, of course, painted in a certain way so that people will know them by sight."

Bucky jumped up from the davenport on which he had been lounging and threw away his cigarette.

"Come on!" he called. "If we're going back to-morrow we're wasting time. I say, we buy the cars to-day and motor back in them."

"A parade! A procession! A triumphal entry, like circuses have!" echoed Simeon the Monk.

"We'll each get a car, and we'll drive 'em ourselves," pursued Bucky. "Seven cars—in single file—all painted alike! What do you say?"

"Hurrah!" shouted Dicky Mason.

The others added their voices to his despite the occupants of near-by suites.

"But is there time, if we leave to-morrow?"

"Plenty of time!" Bucky assured him confidently.

"You can do anything with money," added Reddy. "We'll go about from one showroom to another until we find some place that has on hand seven identical cars ready for immediate delivery. With the number of concerns there are, I should think it would be easy!"

"But do we all know how to run cars?" asked Alonzo.

"Suppose we don't? Haven't we all afternoon to learn how?" cried Bucky disgustedly.

"Of course! Get a move on, young Barrister! Stop prinking, Gordon!" added Reddy.

They seized hats and sticks and sallied forth into the velvet-carpeted corridor; smiled and nodded at the floor clerk, who gave them back a cordial greeting; rang the bell, descended in the lift, filling it to capacity, and were presently crowding into a couple of taxies at the door.

At the first two stops the salesmen received their inquiries with astonishment, incredulity, and mirth; thought the whole thing a joke of some sort, and did not even make an effort to find out whether or not the order could be filled. It is not every day, of course, that seven gentlemen appear in search of runabouts, for which they are willing to pay cash if the cars are forthcoming immediately.

At the third stop they were taken seriously, but the order could not be filled in time. At the fourth they were informed that they could be accommodated. A dozen new runabouts painted a beautiful royal purple, with black leather cushions and black wire wheels, had just arrived at the stock-rooms in Long Island City.

They were smart, racy cars of the latest design, completely equipped with all the newest devices, and all ready to be driven out as they stood. Moreover, an expert could be supplied to give lessons in driving that same afternoon, and license plates could be loaned to the purchasers until they got their own.

The gentleman in charge of the sales-room was a hustler well worthy of his berth. While Bucky and his friends went to outfit themselves in suitable motoring-togs, he made his arrangements for the delivery of the cars. By six o'clock that night—after they had spent the four preceding hours in the unfrequented byways of Long Island, learning the mys-

teries of driving — our seven gentlemen set out for New York, by way of the Fifty-Ninth Street bridge, each at the wheel of a royal purple roadster, with black leather cushions and black wire wheels.

Their passage created a stir of interest even in the Manhattan streets where the unusual is a thing of daily occurrence. They suggested advertisements more than ever. People thought they were being employed by the makers of the car, and approved the idea. Even the traffic policemen smiled as they whizzed by, and made no attempt to separate them.

They made arrangements at the nearest garage to store the cars overnight, and left them over the dinner-hour, taxiing back to the hotel to dress for the evening and dine. They did not don formal black and white to-night. They meant to spend the evening practising with their new toys—to call for the girls after the performance, and motor them out to Parker's themselves.

So eleven o'clock found them at the end of the line-up of cars beside the theater where "Little Miss Muffet" held forth. By following the line they knew they would reach the mouth of the alleyway at just about the proper moment, and yet in plenty of time to astonish their ladies.

No hint of the newly acquired cars had as yet been vouchsafed to the girls. Bucky had phoned, telling them not to wear evening things, but they had no idea of his reasons.

The procession of purple runabouts had an enormous success. A crowd soon gathered to examine them—to see who were going to get into them—to see them start. And as the girls made their way with difficulty through the crowd, and discovered the reception awaiting them, they were rendered absolutely speechless with excitement and surprise.

Accustomed though they were to publicity and display—to being stared at and applauded—they were dazed by the send-off that they had from the delighted on-

lookers as the procession slowly got under way. The sight was truly a pleasing one—seven spandy new purple cars, exactly alike; seven good-looking young men in linen dusters and caps at the wheels; seven famous theatrical beauties lounging beside them—small wonder they attracted the attention of even worldly-wise, blasé old Broadway.

With a tooting of horns and a hubbub of chatter and laughter, they headed up-town, Bucky leading the way with Sylvia, the others following close behind him. And then began their last and biggest celebration of all.

Never before had the girls been so gay, so anxious to be entertaining. Never had they danced with more riotous abandon. Never had they laughed so heartily at nothing at all. Never had so many toasts been drunk. Never had they been so sentimental as they were in the early morning hours as they sped home along the deserted streets and watched the dawn break.

Sylvia nestled against Bucky, who was driving with one hand on the wheel and the other around her. Her golden head rested against his shoulder, and wisps of her hair blew out now and again, to whip his cheek and thrill him with the contact, and with the faint fragrance that always hovered about her.

"You *will* come back again soon, won't you?" she whispered, with the suspicion of tears in her voice.

"You *bet* I will," he answered emphatically, "or I'll have you up to Elmhaven."

"You only say it to please me. You'll forget all about me," said she.

"No—if there's any forgetting, *you'll* do it," answered Bucky.

"I'll never forget you — *never!*" protested Sylvia passionately, cuddling closer to him.

He wished that he hadn't promised the others to go back, and he made a mental vow to come down to see her again within a week or ten days. Hugging her rapturously, he whispered:

"You little *peach!*"

"You'll write to me, won't you? *Promise!*" she urged.

"I promise," said Bucky.

She let him see the big tears rolling down her cheeks as he kissed her good-by and left her at last. The sun was up as he drove back to the hotel, and the other fellows, already assembled and waiting, were in high good humor; but Bucky was heavy of heart. Loving and parting are sad things when one is twenty-two!

## CHAPTER X

### THE RETURN

LATE that same afternoon, being out to enjoy the balmy day, the whole town witnessed the grand entry into Elmhaven of the seven wanderers in their seven purple runabouts, each car flying a pennant of the university colors. Pedestrians halted to see the procession go by. College boys shouted and waved their caps. Girls laughed and elbowed one another, and called to their companions to see. Several professors, walking sedately across the campus, stared after this new manifestation of college spirit with some surprise. A mob of small boys and idlers of greater age followed to see what new devilment was afoot.

In the words of Alonzo, they "had a great success." The word was passed along that Bucky and his mates had returned in seven motors all painted purple, and the whole college community managed to pass the hall where the seven lodged in order to inspect the cars lined up before the door.

Meanwhile, the seven inside held a sort of reception, whereat they regaled stray visitors with tales of their great Broadway invasion, and—offering cigars and cigarettes of the very finest quality—enlarged on their plans for the proposed Owl House. Later, they began to look about for a suitable dwelling, and visited

several real-estate concerns to make known their needs.

But, as it turned out, the Owl House never came to be, nor did any of their brilliant plans for the waking up of Elmhaven materialize. For the morning after their return brought them news of an amazing, unexpected, and disagreeable nature.

During their absence in the metropolis all seven had been expelled. The newspaper in which Bucky had been so sensationally written up had penetrated even to the fastnesses of Elmhaven, and had created a most unpleasant sensation.

Bucky had obtained leave of absence on the strength of his great-uncle Chauncey's demise, but the other six hadn't bothered to apply for leave at all, each figuring that he had cuts enough to tide him over. But the faculty was not disposed to countenance such behavior on the part of Elmhaven undergraduates as the New York newspaper reported; so the seven young gentlemen found themselves suddenly and politely cast out.

Bucky accepted the blow philosophically. New York had looked pretty good to him, and he was inclined to regard the college regulations as rather trying. Alonzo, too, was far from heart-broken. His parents were in South America. They did not speak English—only Spanish—and Alonzo felt confident of being able to explain to them that he had merely graduated a few months earlier than he had expected. In this way, instead of being blamed for his dismissal, he was likely to be rewarded for his unusual proficiency.

Reddy Wheeler, the third young reprobate, had a hard-headed father in Chicago who would expect a full and complete accounting for Reddy's misdeeds; but there was nothing on earth or in heaven that Reddy Wheeler could not explain. He had the happy faculty of being able to make black look like white, and to transform his shortcomings into positive virtues by the simple matter of an explanation.

So he wrote to his father that he had

heard of a splendid business opportunity in New York. Knowing how near graduation time was, and that he must expect to earn his own living afterward, he had taken the bit in his teeth, he said, and had simply bolted for the metropolis without leave in order to make this business connection, if possible. He added that by great good fortune he had landed the job—with William Rollins, the millionaire—and that although the college authorities had expelled him for leaving Elmhaven without permission, he had really laid a splendid foundation for his future.

Gordon Prime, Jimmy Barrister, Simon the Monk Atherton, and Dicky Mason faced the crisis in a different spirit. Humbling themselves before the faculty, they did penance and were taken back—to the disgust of the other three.

So the seven separated. Four of them got down to work again, with only the memory of five wonderful days to cheer them on. Three chucked their belongings on their roadsters and wiped the dust of Elmhaven forever from their feet.

They made the trip back to New York in less time than they had made the run to Elmhaven; but, having started later, they did not reach town until after nine. By the time they had engaged rooms, had arranged about the cars, and had dressed carefully, the theaters were out. They made for the stage door to surprise the girls. To their chagrin, however, they were surprised, too—unpleasantly surprised—to find that all three—Sylvia, Daisy, and Marguerite—had dates with other men.

The girls were as much annoyed and disappointed as Bucky and his chums, when they appeared. No word had been vouchsafed them, they said, and of course they hadn't *dreamed* of expecting so speedy a return; so no fault could be found with *them*. They would have made excuses and broken their dates, except that their escorts were there, too; so there was no chance of politely lying

out of it. The best they could do was to promise to meet the boys at eleven o'clock the next morning.

It was a sad beginning to the second chapter of their adventures, but they were forced to make the best of it. Going on from the stage door to the nearest roof-garden, they watched the midnight show and appraised the girls, who were supposed to be startlingly pulchritudinous. But Bucky saw no one who could be compared to Sylvia; Alonzo saw no one who looked as good to him as the Titian-haired Marguerite; and Reddy Wheeler saw no one that he would even have *declined* as a supper companion.

Bucky, though he said nothing about it to any one, was hurt by Sylvia's placid acceptance of other men's invitations. She had really made him believe that she cared for him, and he had not expected her to go on chasing about with any man who asked her to supper, just because Bucky himself was not at hand. Indeed, if any other half-way attractive girl had got hold of him that night, Sylvia would probably have lost her hold on him.

But luck was with her. No other girl turned up to poach upon her preserves, and the next morning, at breakfast, she was speedily able to convince him that she only accepted the other man's invitation in desperation, because she felt so blue and lonely and depressed, and wanted to forget.

So things settled down into the old order, only on an even more elaborate scale. Bucky took a big house, furnished it, put in a small army of servants, and began to entertain on a magnificent scale. He entertained not only his college friends and their girls, but other gay and lively people in town. His parties became famous, and he himself was a frequent Sunday-supplement figure.

When the warmer weather came he increased his possessions by a "gentleman's country estate" on Long Island, with a private bathing-beach and a membership card in the nearest country club. He chartered a yacht, too—one that was too



large and expensive for the man who had built it—and continued amusing himself to the best of his own and Reddy Wheeler's ability.

Gladwin, meanwhile, observed his behavior with grave concern. In the beginning he had overlooked Bucky's wild extravagance, thinking that it was but a fling and would soon end when the young man's natural good sense asserted itself. But it did not end, even though the lawyer ventured a remonstrance or two—timidly at first, and then more forcibly, more anxiously.

In plain words, Bucky had lost his head. He was fascinated by the life he led. He was enjoying himself as he had never thought possible before. The people he had gathered around him were amusing and interesting and clever if not *quite* respectable. He knew as well as Gladwin did what reputations some of them had; but he was learning to wink at the immoralities of his friends, if only they did not bore him.

So he continued to ask Mrs. Johnstone Gerald and young Matthews; Anton Heindeli and any young woman with whom he chanced to be smitten at the moment; Valeria Slaveski with her broker; Cecily Locke, the vaudeville actress; Mr. and Mrs. Illinsby, the illustrators; Courvetsky, the portrait-painter who was painting Sylvia; Claire Lorriemer, the writer, who smoked cigars, played polo, and swore like a guardsman; and goodness knows how many other Broadway celebrities, more amusing than conventional.

Reddy Wheeler was in charge of things, having elected himself a sort of master of ceremonies, to lift a lot of bothersome burdens off his friend's shoulders and leave Bucky freer to devote himself to Sylvia. And he filled his office with praiseworthy zeal. Never did any one want for anything to eat or drink or smoke. Never did Bucky's guests lack entertainment.

One Sunday night a whole theatrical company was brought down from New

York to Bucky's country place. Another time a "water circus" was given in the pool below the terrace, with all sorts of aquatic features. Always there were vaudeville turns, rag-singers, and string orchestras about.

Small wonder that Gladwin was dismayed! However, his friendly protests availed him nothing, and he was moved to try strategy. He had invited Bucky many times to dine or call, but though Bucky promised to come, he never did.

It was in Gladwin's mind that if the young fellow could be brought into contact with a nice girl of his own sort—with Nancy, for instance—who would exert a good influence over him, he might be induced to put an end to the mad-money-spending campaign—the life of dissipation upon which he had embarked. So Gladwin persuaded Nancy to write and ask Bucky to come to her first dance on the 10th of June.

Nancy didn't want to write to him at all. She had once cherished a tremendous fondness for Bucky Rollins. They had been sweethearts one whole summer, when he was nine and she was seven; and though she had never seen him since, she had always treasured a certain affection for him in her heart. He had been such a fine little boy! It was impossible to believe that Bucky Rollins, millionaire, was the same person.

She pored over the newspaper accounts of his escapades with a hot face and tears stinging her eyelids. She studied his photographs with an aching heart. She read of his infatuation for Beauty Nelson with distress and disgust and scorn. She wanted nothing to do with him if he was merely a Broadway reveler. She wanted to be allowed to keep her precious memories unsullied.

But her father's wish was law to Nancy, who was a sweet and obedient child, and she wrote Bucky Rollins the nicest letter she could write.

MY DEAR BUCKY:

I dare say you have forgotten me, but I haven't forgotten *you*, even if it is thirteen long

years and more since we parted so tearfully. I've always looked forward to meeting you again, and I've kept hoping and hoping that you'd come to see me. But as you haven't, I'm taking the initiative on the strength of old friendship.

Won't you come to my ball on June 10? I call it a ball, because it is my very first, and I feel important about it; but it is really just a small dance. I do hope you will come, Bucky. Write to me in any case, and let me know.

Both mother and father send their regards to you. I do, too, Bucky—my warmest regards—to the little boy I used to know.

Very sincerely yours,

NANCY GLADWIN.

Bucky had the letter for a week before he even opened it, for his mail had grown to such proportions that he let it accumulate for days before he found the courage to go through it. When he did finally discover Nancy's letter, however, it sent a glow to his heart.

He felt himself a boor and a cad for neglecting her so. Genuinely contrite, he sat down at once to answer her.

DEAR NANCY:

Nothing could keep me away from your ball on June 10. I call it a ball, too, because it is just as important to me, you see.

With warmest regards to the little girl I used to know.

Very sincerely,

WILLIAM RAYMOND ROLLINS.

Having written the acceptance in good faith, he noted down the date, so that he couldn't possibly forget it—and then he promptly forgot, for by the 10th of June he was heels over head in a new proposition that absorbed him completely.

He was engaged in the pleasing business of making a star of Sylvia.

## CHAPTER XI

### SYLVIA STARS

THANKS to Bucky, Sylvia's lines had fallen in very pleasant places since the return of the three cavaliers to town. Of course she had registered a ladylike protest against his spending his money on her; but Bucky had a quality of mastery

that swept aside all her timid objections. He pointed out to her that he had really more money than he needed—that it made him happy to do things for her, because they were such pals, and he was so fond of her—and that beauty like hers required care and attention or it would surely never last. Half frightened, then, or pretending to be—admitting that her beauty was her chief stock in trade—Sylvia yielded.

Bucky got her an apartment for her very own. Hitherto she had shared a cheap one with two other girls. Now, she reveled in a very expensive one for her exclusive use.

It was reached through a foyer gorgeous with marble and gilt and tapestry, and filled with colored attendants in livery. It faced Riverside Drive, with an outlook over the river to the Palisades. It was decorated with a lavish hand, the color-schemes being chosen specially to frame Sylvia's delicate coloring. Three servants were installed to wait upon her—a cook, a housemaid, and a personal maid. All of them, of course, Bucky paid.

Sylvia was earning thirty dollars a week. Most chorus-girls are glad to get twenty-five, but Sylvia was a beauty, she was much advertised, she had a "following"—many friends among the wealthy young fellows in town—and she was much sought after as a model by artists, illustrators, and advertisers. She was, therefore, well worth the additional five dollars a week. But, though smart tailors and designers furnished her clothes at cost, in exchange for her recommendation, and though she picked up from ten to twenty dollars a week by posing, she could never have managed to keep the apartment going without Bucky.

He also gave her a smart little landaulet, finished in blue—the shade of her eyes—with two uniformed men on the box and her monogram in gold on the door. He enlarged her wardrobe to tremendous proportions by carefully selected gifts, and he amused himself designing jewelry for her that was quite different

from the jewelry worn by any other woman in town.

So Sylvia was comfortable. Not only was she enjoying every luxury obtainable, but she was preparing to go on enjoying these things indefinitely by means of the jewels Bucky gave her and the money she was able to bank illicitly. But she was not happy. Curled up on the *chaise longue* in her little sitting-room, she admitted this to Bucky.

He had found her pouting, sulking, fretting, and looking adorable in a negligee of soft blue stuff, with a bewitching cap drawn over her shining hair. As he sat down beside her and put his arm around her, and as she pressed her cool cheek against his face, she told him frankly what the trouble was.

"I know I'm a hateful, envious, ungrateful little cat, Bucky," she said, "but I am wretched! How could I be otherwise? Everybody knows I'm only in the chorus, and they know how much I make. They know I can't be living this way on my own earnings. And they say horrid things—simply *horrid!*"

Bucky looked concerned and rather apprehensive.

"It wouldn't be so bad if I had a part," she went on. "You never know how much girls are getting when they play parts, because there isn't any standard of wages for parts. It depends on the girl herself; on how well advertised she has been; on how big a drawing-card she is, and on the length of the part. But there's no chance of my getting even a bit. And I know I could get away with it. The fact is, I'm ambitious, Bucky!"

She was. She told the truth there.

"I don't like being only one of the chorus. I don't like seeing other girls not half as clever or pretty as I am playing parts. It would be different if I couldn't sing, but I can. You know I can, Bucky! And I can dance, and I can read lines!"

"Why don't you get out of the chorus, then, and try for a part?" he asked.

She gave him a hopeless look and sighed.

"My dear boy, don't you suppose I'd have done that long ago if it had been possible? Do you suppose I ever wanted to be in the chorus? No manager will give you a start. The first thing they ask you is, 'Had any experience? What did you do last season?' And they don't even have to *ask* me. They know!"

"But there must be some way to begin. How did all the others begin?" asked Bucky.

"There are two ways—go to the dramatic school for two years and run a chance of attracting some manager's eye when you're playing in the special matinees, or—get some manager interested in you personally. Do you know what that means?"

Bucky frowned and colored.

"Want to go to the dramatic school?" he asked hastily, to avoid disclosures.

"Waste two years learning how to do what I know how to do already?"

"It does seem too bad," admitted Bucky; "but if there's no other way—"

"There is another way," she reminded him, cuddling closer. "I just told you—get a manager interested in you."

"But surely you're not thinking of *that*?" he gasped.

She nodded.

"*Sylvia!*" he cried in horror, holding her off to stare down at her.

"Silly boy!" she laughed, throwing back her head, and showing him that she had been teasing him. "Don't you understand? If you would be my manager it would be easy! For you are interested in me already!"

"I?" gasped Bucky.

"Aren't you interested in me?"

"Yes, of course. But how could I be a manager?"

"By backing a show."

He sat gazing at her with wide-open, astonished blue eyes.

"Why not?" she asked argumentatively. "You'd find it awfully interesting and exciting. It's the most interesting and exciting game in the world—and the biggest gamble."

"Is it?" he asked, his fancy caught.

"Of course. You never know until the curtain rises on the opening night whether you've got a hit or a flivver. You can go to the very best composers and librettists and song-writers—men who've written dozens of successes. You can squander a fortune on scenery and costumes. You can get the biggest producer in the business to put the show on—and still you may have a frost on your hands when you open on Broadway. Then, again, you may get hold of a book that's been kicking around from one office to another for five years, buy up some scenery that was built for another show that never came in, get a few trunkfuls of second-hand costumes at cost, and discover that you've got a knock-out. You never can tell. That's the reason why fortunes are made and lost overnight."

"But I don't know a darned thing about the show business," protested Bucky.

"You don't have to. You can pay to have everything done for you. And I can steer you right. I've learned something about it—in the last 'steen years!"

He jumped up and began to pace the floor.

"It *would* be fun, though, wouldn't it?" he observed in some excitement.

"Rather!"

"I suppose I could have the run of the stage—back of the scenes—instead of waiting for you at the stage door with all the rest of the johns?"

"Of course! You could wait in my dressing-room—when I'm not changing. And you could visit me between the acts; and on matinee-days we'd dine there, and I wouldn't have to leave the theater or take off my make-up."

"I'll do it!" decided Bucky impulsively.

"Oh, you *darling!*" she cried, hugging him gratefully. "Stoop down till I kiss you!"

He complied, and then seated himself beside her again in a businesslike fashion.

"How do I begin?" he asked.

"You begin by getting hold of a good script," she informed him; "or, rather, of a script that *looks* good. You can't really tell, of course. You have to just guess."

"And where does one get scripts?"

"Well, there are agents handling them. I think we'd better try that way first. You can have them written to order, but it takes longer, and you never can be sure you'll like what you get. Shall I phone some of the agents?"

"Yes."

She was up and at the phone before the word was out of his mouth, and she knew the number without having to consult the book—which looked as if she had had the idea in her head for some time.

She explained to the agent, when she was finally connected, that she wanted a musical-comedy book, full of comedy, and with a nice part for a young prima donna. She made the same explanation to two other agents, and then came back to sit on Bucky's knee and wait for the messengers who were to bring the manuscripts. She always sat on his knee when she wanted to please him. He liked it. It made him feel wonderfully strong and masterful.

"We must have wonderful costumes and scenery and lots of pretty girls," she announced, rumpling his hair. "I know just about the crowd we'll want. But you must promise me not to even *look* at any of them!"

"I promise," he answered meekly.

She hugged him.

"If we hurry," she added, "we can open in August—just when everybody's getting tired of the summer shows, and before there are many fall openings. Then—if we catch on—we can run through the whole season. It's going to be profitable as well as exciting, Bucky dear—if we put it over!"

"We'll put it over, never fear," he assured her. "Now that I come to think of it, why I'm sure I was born for the show business!"



"And I'm sure *I* was!" she agreed.

"With the aid of Reddy and Alonzo we can do anything, I'm sure," he ended up. "And that reminds me—I haven't told them yet. Pardon me!"

He lifted her lightly in his arms and moved her from his knee to the couch, where she remained ensconced among the silken cushions as he went to phone.

He found his friends still asleep, as he had expected, but willing to be awakened in any good cause. The simple announcement that he had big doings on hand brought the quick response that they would be with him anon.

Within three-quarters of an hour they appeared. The manuscripts had come in the mean time—a fearful pile of them, in blue or pink or tan covers, each script carefully typed and bound and underscored in red ink.

"Have we got to read these?" gasped Bucky, surveying the mass before him with undisguised horror.

"We have," answered Sylvia cheerfully; "else how can we hope to find a good one? We'll take turns at reading aloud."

"It 'll take us weeks—months—years!" protested Bucky.

"Not at all! We may strike a good one at any moment. The very first one has as good a chance of being the right one as any," pointed out Reddy, settling himself comfortably in his chair.

"Come, Bucky—patience, my lad! Calm down!" added Alonzo.

He lighted a cigarette and passed it to Sylvia, who accepted it thankfully. Then he lighted another for himself.

Bucky crouched down on the couch, and, lying on his back with his legs crossed and his feet in the air, grumbled:

"All right! Fire away!"

Whereupon Sylvia selected a script at random, cleared her throat, lifted the cover, and began to read.

They abandoned the first one after reading the cast-page. It was a play laid in ancient Greece. No opportunity for Lucille costumes, rag-time music, and modern dances!

They abandoned the second book after a glance at the synopsis. It called for twenty-two scenes. It was an extravaganza intended for Christmas production.

They abandoned the third one because it was a sort of light opera laid in Germany, and opening with the peasants clinking mugs and cavorting before an inn.

They abandoned the fourth because the leading feminine rôle required a grand-opera soprano.

They had to read half-way through the fifth to discover that there wasn't enough comedy.

The sixth proved utterly impossible in every way.

The seventh had lots of comedy, but no opportunities for Sylvia.

The eighth was fair, but nothing startling. It had been done before in thousands of slightly different guises.

The ninth was the very one they wanted.

Tired and bored and weary as they were, they sat up eagerly as Reddy proceeded to read it aloud. They laughed at the lines and situations. They saw brilliant possibilities for fetching costumes and scenery. They saw a knock-out number for eight pretty girls. It seemed to have everything!

"Hurrah!" cried Bucky, sitting up triumphantly.

"Eureka!" added Alonzo.

"'The Girl in Yellow,'" repeated Sylvia. "A great title! And I look stunning in yellow, too!"

"When can we hear the music?" asked Bucky.

"The music isn't important. We can interpolate numbers if the score is rotten as it stands," explained Sylvia.

"Shall we go on reading the rest of them, or call this one the one?" asked Reddy, rummaging through the remaining manuscripts.

"Call this one the one, by all means," decided Bucky.

"I'll phone the agent, then," cried Sylvia eagerly, "and ask about an appoint-

ment to settle terms and so on. When will you see him?"

"I'll not see him," answered Bucky. "That end of it doesn't interest me a little bit."

"I'll see him," volunteered Reddy. "Make a date for me any time to-morrow, and—if you can—arrange to have the score played for us to-night."

"After the show, of course," added Sylvia.

"Are you still going on in 'Little Miss Muffet,' now that you are so soon to star?" asked Alonzo, surprised.

"Well, to-night, anyway," explained Sylvia. "I want to talk to the girls and see how many of them will come with us. I think we might offer them a little more money, don't you?" she asked Bucky.

"Sure!" agreed Bucky generously.

"Jane Heather, Ivy MacClelland, Ethelyn and Dolly Kearney, Stella Welles, and Patsy Crockett can be the six special girls, if they will," mused Sylvia reflectively. "And Marguerite can be that haughty countess in the second act; and Daisy would be charming as the maid who changes clothes with me!"

"Do you think the haughty countess quite—quite important enough for Marguerite?" asked Alonzo anxiously.

"Indeed I do," answered Sylvia emphatically. "You couldn't get her to memorize lines. Besides, we can't have all ex-chorus girls in the principal parts, you know, if we're going to put this show over."

"Right-o!" nodded Reddy.

Sylvia picked up the phone and called the play-broker.

"I suppose you've some idea what this is going to cost you?" asked Reddy of Bucky, in the interim.

"Not the least," answered Bucky nonchalantly.

"Don't you want to find out?" asked Reddy.

"No. I'll leave that part of it to you. You be the financial adviser, as usual, and Lonny and I will look after the artistic end of the production. I intend to

amuse myself exceedingly with scene-models and costume-plates and rehearsals during the next few weeks."

"I will try the voices," announced Alonzo dramatically.

"An interesting job I've got—to haggle over the prices and add up the bills!" commented Reddy.

Bucky chuckled.

"You're too blamed susceptible, anyway, to be allowed around loose with a lot of actresses," he observed.

This was by way of being a jest. Reddy was the coolest, most indifferent man in the world. He made a pretense of being fond of Daisy, but everybody knew he wasn't really.

Sylvia trailed back from the telephone, her pale-blue draperies fluttering and her fragrance permeating the air.

"Composer will be here to-night at eleven, sharp," she announced. "And I've made a date for Reddy to talk business with the agent and the author to-morrow at eleven."

"I'll be there," said Reddy.

"I doubt it; but they'll wait. The first thing you have to learn about the show business is that nobody ever keeps appointments on time."

"When do you intend to start putting on this show, anyway?" asked Alonzo.

"At once. In the next two days we can get the costume-plates and scenery started. Then we'll get the cast together. That ought to allow us to begin rehearsals by the following week. We can open in July, somewhere out of town, play the summer resorts, and come into New York in August."

"If we live through the out-of-town engagement," commented Reddy.

"Of course we'll do that. We'll have a knock-out, if we only get down to business and put some brains into this!" cried Bucky.

"Brains!" echoed Sylvia. "I'll put my whole body and soul into it!"

"Hurrah! That's the spirit," cried Alonzo. "Wine! We must drink to the success of 'The Yellow Lady'!"

"'The Girl in Yellow,'" corrected Reddy.

"'The Girl in Yellow!'" they all shouted enthusiastically.

And so the great project was launched.

## CHAPTER XII

### "THE GIRL IN YELLOW"

THE instant the news spread through the theatrical district of New York—Broadway and its environment, that is—there ensued a mad scramble to get into Sylvia's show. For it was known that a young millionaire was backing it; and every one guessed that whether it made money or lost, it would remain on Broadway for months and months, and salaries would be paid regularly.

There are two sorts of theatrical productions—regular shows produced as a legitimate business enterprise by managers who devote their time, attention, and money exclusively to the business of producing shows; and shows that are "backed," or financed, by "angels"—wealthy men not of the theater life, but inveigled into it by some smooth-tongued promoter or some siren-voiced charmer.

Shows of the former class stand a better chance of succeeding, because a man invests his own money only in something that he considers a fairly safe bet, and because every move he makes is prompted by a thorough knowledge of the game he is playing. However, he may not have the money at his command to force a run—that is, to keep the play running regardless of box-office receipts, on the chance that it may eventually catch on; while a show backed by an angel may play through the season, in spite of tremendous losses, simply that Miss So-and-So may be featured, or that the angel may try to recoup himself on the road.

Often the road will like a show which New York didn't like, but which the road thinks New York *did* like because it had a long metropolitan run to its credit. So the Broadway players—the actors, ac-

tresses, and chorus-people who hover as near as possible to the bright lights of the Gay White Way—usually prefer to cast their lot with an angel's show, providing they are tolerably certain that the backer is financially strong enough to stand the strain.

When it was rumored about that Bucky Rollins—as he was now coming to be known throughout the whole theatrical community—was going to make a star of Sylvia Nelson, there followed a stampede to get into the show. The result was that an excellent cast was speedily engaged. All the other choruses in town were pilfered of their choicest beauties and best-looking boys. A comedian of nation-wide reputation was induced to desert vaudeville in order to support the new luminary. A pair of famous dancers were procured to do a specialty; and a producer was brought over from England to put on the show.

Alonzo and Bucky and Reddy were the three very busiest men in New York, and, without a doubt, the three very happiest. They picked out their forty girls from the several hundred applicants, and had flash-lights made of the squad. They patched up quarrels between the comedian and the producer, between Sylvia and the author, between the composer and the orchestra-leader. They listened to "song-pluggers" sent by the music-publishers to try to get interpolated numbers into the show.

They tried to convince the composer that his score needed bolstering up. They criticised costume-plates and scene-models. They sat in a cold, damp, darkened theater and watched the chorus being put through the dances; then went out into the lobby and listened to the principals rehearsing the lines. They ordered "paper"—advertising matter for bill-board display—and "props"—objects required for use in the play, such as parasols, books, a suit-case, a despatch-box, and so forth.

They ate hurried lunches and hurried dinners at the nearest cafés between re-

hearsals. They pulled wires galore to get introductions to managers, theater-owners, and other important personages of the theatrical world. They entertained newspapermen of all sorts. They encouraged the press-agent to embark upon a gigantic advertising campaign. They had themselves put up for membership in theatrical clubs.

Meanwhile, the 10th of June came, and Bucky gave no thought to poor Nancy Gladwin and her first ball. She had passed completely out of his mind. Absorbed in his newest fad, he did not send her flowers, he did not telegraph her that he had broken a leg and therefore was unable to attend, nor did he go.

Eagerly, tremulously, wistfully, Nancy stood at her mother's side, a slender, girlish figure all swathed in white, with a huge corsage of sweet peas, and a fan to hide her blushes. She watched each new arrival, searched each advancing face hopefully, for some sign of Bucky; but the hour grew later and later, and he did not come, and the gladness was drained out of her heart, beat by beat.

Foolishly, she had dreamed dreams. She had idealized this playmate of her youth. She had glorified the sweet, peaceful quiet of her days with fancies concerning this young *Prince Charming*. And what high hopes she had based upon his letter! What miraculous results she expected from his coming to her ball!

But he did not come, and though she danced every dance, though she laughed and jested, though she glowed beneath the admiring glances of a dozen young cavaliers, she was far from content. And her father guessed why, for she had talked a great deal of Bucky in the days just preceding her ball. Now, she pretended not to have noticed that Bucky didn't come; but her father guessed her thoughts.

Blissfully unaware of the bitter disappointment he had caused poor little Nancy, blissfully unconscious of the shattering blow he had dealt her dream-castles, Bucky sat in the dingy, dirty, close

rehearsal-hall on Sixth Avenue and listened to the chorus singing dispiritedly:

We are leaders of fashion;  
With us it's a passion  
To ride every day in the Row;  
Eleven's the hour, you know—  
The very best people all go!

And he did not even smile at the ludicrous contrast between the bedraggled, weary girls and the dashing lyric of the horsewomen's number. He was too intent upon listening to their enunciation, watching their feet, and wondering if they'd ever be able to go through it without mistakes.

They had been rehearsing for three weeks, and it was high time to "put the show together"—that is, to let the principals and chorus work in conjunction to put the dialogue where it belonged and the numbers where they belonged; in short, give the first trial performance. So far, the chorus had worked in one room, centering its attention upon songs and dances, while the principals busied themselves with the "book," so that no definite impression of the whole thing could be obtained.

Bucky was so much absorbed in the play that he had moments of the blackest depression, and periods of distress as acute as if his living actually depended upon the success of the venture. Then, again, his spirits would soar, and he would assure everybody who would listen to him that "The Girl in Yellow" was the greatest musical show ever conceived.

Sylvia and Alonzo shared these moods. Reddy, who was more engrossed in the business details than in anything else about the production, never expressed any sort of opinion. Indeed, it was only rarely that he looked on. Usually, he spent his time talking with the practical men around the show. He seized his opportunities. While the others interestedly watched order evolve out of chaos, he was devoting his utmost to learn the business tricks of the trade.

In spite of his natural caution and shrewdness, however, the bills he present-



ed to his friend were enormous. Even Bucky's well-filled purse felt the drain. As for Gladwin, upon whom Bucky had to call with increasing frequency, he had long since ceased to regard our young gentleman with friendly and kindly toleration. He no longer felt that Bucky was merely having his fling. He said openly that the heir of the late Chauncey Rollins was playing the fool.

"You've surrounded yourself with a crowd of bloodless parasites, I tell you!" he declared vehemently. "It took three generations of Rollinses to amass the fortune that you are going to dissipate in a few years, if you keep on as you are going now. You know what they say about a fool and his money!"

"Yes, but I don't see the connection," protested Bucky, refusing to get as angry as the older man. "I'm engaged in a legitimate business proposition, and—"

"You're pouring your money into a sieve—trying to make a star of a girl just because you're taken with her! You ought to learn to discriminate between your personal affairs and your business interests. I've seen this same stunt tried before—yes, and by men more capable of winning out, too—by experienced men. It's your own money you're throwing away, but it hurts me to see it, that's all!"

Bucky smiled confidently.

"I'm sorry to cause you any discomfort, but I assure you that you don't understand. You don't realize this girl's possibilities as I do. She's going to make so much money for me that I'll get back everything that I've spent and a great deal more besides. Why, everybody around the show is remarking, now, how clever she is!"

Gladwin grunted.

"Well, I suppose you'll have your own way, no matter what I say," he commented. "Young blood will have its course!"

With a sigh, he drew forward a legal-looking document and shot it toward Bucky

"Sign there," he directed, dipping the pen.

Bucky signed, and accepted the check that Gladwin extended.

"I'm very much obliged to you, sir," he said.

Folding the check to lay it away carefully in his wallet, he smiled and nodded and passed out.

He no longer remembered to send his love to Nancy. He had forgotten that Nancy existed.

July came, and the weather in town grew unendurable. Bucky moved the whole company down to his place on Long Island for the final rehearsals. He put them up as his guests there, on his yacht, which was lying off shore in the bay, and at the country club near by.

They all revived miraculously in the cool of the shaded lawns and the pleasant breeze from the sea. Though they worked as hard as they had worked in town—harder, if anything—there was still time for a morning dip in the sea; and they found themselves able to eat heartily again in the open court at Bucky's place, or on the clubhouse verandas or on the yacht.

They got as far as the dress rehearsal out of town, then went back again for that, as there was naturally no theater to be had in Bucky's neighborhood.

The dress rehearsal remained one of Bucky's poignant memories to his dying day. Everything went wrong, and instead of ending at twelve or one o'clock, as he had imagined it would, it dragged on drearily all through the night.

Everybody fought with everybody else, more and more fiercely as nerves grew more and more strained. The leading man resigned, and had to be coaxed back. The comedian's wife slapped his face. The scenery wouldn't light up properly, and had to be altered. The doors weren't swung well, and wouldn't open. Some furniture was upholstered in the wrong shade of damask.

Sylvia's first gown was miles too big

for her, and her last-act costume, beautiful at close range, looked like nothing at all from out front. The property-man had forgotten half of the "props." The orchestra-leader came in drunk. There wasn't space enough in the throne-room scene for the elaborate formation that the producer had so painstakingly worked out and rehearsed.

Some of the chorus-girls refused to wear their gowns. Others demanded more assistance in getting into them. Sylvia's father—her father in the play, that is—forgot his lines and couldn't remember them even when he was prompted.

The first act ran two hours, the second act two hours and a half the first time they went straight through it. That meant a continuous performance from eight o'clock until half past twelve, without intermission—necessitating a cut of at least two hours.

Two numbers were eliminated, which rendered one complete set of costumes and a lot of props useless. A few speeches were cut. Some entrances were changed. The whole performance was speeded up, and an hour and five minutes was gained.

Another scene was now sacrificed, despite the author's bitter protests. It was decided not to use the Hawaiian singers and dancers, though their salaries would have to be paid for two weeks in lieu of notice. The comedian was induced to "can" his drunken scene—the familiar drunken scene that is known all over America—the one that first achieved his rise out of burlesque.

It was then found that the show ran within time-limits, but neither smoothly nor perfectly. Every one seemed less competent than he had been two weeks before. The author roared and growled; the composer bit his nails and sulked; the music-publishers' representatives complained that their numbers were being ruined; the stage-director swore.

Even the coffee and sandwiches that Bucky had sent in from an all-night café failed to restore peace. A wretched, gray

dawn was breaking over the city by the time they got off their costumes, crawled into their street-clothes, and, without bothering to button unnecessary buttons, without stopping to wipe the fading paint from their faces, slipped out of the stage door and hurried home and to bed before the broad daylight and the heat should make sleep utterly impossible.

Bucky took a hot bath and a hot drink with a big stick in it, but it was an hour before he could get to sleep. He was up again two hours later to see that Reddy and the company manager had all arrangements made for their start.

There was to be no rehearsal that day. In the evening they were to open at Long Branch, and to do the best that they could. The town had been billed for them for four days ahead.

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### CHAPTER XIII

#### THE CURTAIN RISES

BUCKY, Reddy, and Alonzo, with Sylvia, Daisy, and Marguerite, took the boat together for Long Branch in the afternoon. Both Sylvia and Bucky were terribly nervous. She, poor girl, looked wan and white, positively ill. He paced the deck and worried about her. He thought of a thousand and one things that needed doing, and had to break into Reddy's reflections to ask if they had been done.

Reddy was more quiet and preoccupied than any one had ever seen him before. The others were as gay and placid as if nothing portended; and indeed nothing did portend for them.

True, the two girls had parts for the first time in their lives, but they were not ambitious enough to care much whether they succeeded or failed in them. Butterflies by nature, they were content so long as they might circle in the lime-light, array themselves gorgeously, and be amused. Whether they were principals or of the chorus, it made little difference to them.

They lounged near the rail, posed for

the benefit of the other passengers, teased Alonzo, laughed, and jested. They ate bonbons daintily, looked through various magazines, swapped stories of real and fabricated experiences. No one had to be told to what profession they belonged. Smart as they looked, expensively gowned as they were, beautiful, perfectly groomed, there was yet something that betrayed them.

Nor were they altogether sorry. They liked attracting attention. There was something naively childlike in their anxiety to be noticed.

Alonzo, smoking cigarettes and leaning back against the rail to smile at the girls, liked them to be noticed, too. He saw brokers and merchants, on their way to spend the week-end with their wives, gazing at him enviously, and it pleased him. He bent with more loverlike solicitude and a plain air of ownership over Marguerite.

The boat passed out into the open sea. The wind rose, and Margy, Sylvia's colored maid, brought a warm sport-coat of turquoise-blue stuff to wrap around Sylvia. The color seemed to emphasize her delicate pallor.

Bucky, approaching hastily to see if she was quite all right, thought she did not look strong enough to undergo the nerve-racking ordeal of an opening night, and had wild thoughts of postponing it; but when he suggested this to her, she merely smiled and assured him that she'd much rather have it over than have it looming ahead. He thought her very sensible and awfully brave, then, and wondered from what sort of stock she had sprung. He would have been amazed and incredulous if he had known!

They took the train at Atlantic Highlands, and so came in time to Long Branch, where their rooms were ready for them, having been reserved by the advance man. They bathed, changed their clothes, and met for an early dinner in Sylvia's private sitting-room. Then they went round to the theater, though it was still very early.

The scenery had been delayed in some way and was just being taken in, so they had to dodge and twist and feel their way through the litter and across the bare stage to the dressing-rooms.

Other members of the company drifted in, all in good spirits. A growing sense of excitement was in the air. The little girls practised dance-steps in corners. Singers tried their voices. Stagehands and electricians and carpenters called to one another. The stage-director shouted directions. The box-office kept sending back wires of congratulations—stacks of them for everybody. Florists' men brought flowers.

Then there was a general displaying of messages and gifts. Some one discovered that part of a costume was missing. Some one else had forgotten to bring powder, or grease-paint, or cold-cream.

Now the stage was being set for the first act, and the lights were being tried out.

Now the musicians were beginning to tune up in the room devoted to their use beneath the stage.

The company began to drift down the rickety wooden steps, ready for the opening, and looking very strange in their make-ups. Some of them were hardly recognizable. All of them were tremendously transformed.

The fragrance of paints and powders and perfumes and cosmetics filled the air. Weird groups formed—trim maids in caps and aprons next to stately court ladies in satins and jewels, with here and there a gentleman in knee-breeches and a stage-hand in a sweater or overalls, or in a filthy shirt with part of the sleeves gone and no collar.

A fat woman with hideously bleached hair hurries by—a dresser or a wardrobe woman—possibly a once famous and popular chorister herself.

A colored man begins sweeping up the stage.

Some one announces that the doors are open, and there is a rush for the peephole in the curtain.

The audience is beginning to come in. People are actually going to pay to come to see Sylvia Nelson as the *Girl in Yellow*. Reddy comes back to confide to Bucky that they expect to sell out. Bucky refuses to believe it. He hurries out to the lobby with Reddy to see the audience arrive.

An air of expectancy pervades the house.

"What is it—a musical play?" asks a stout matron in lavender, opening her program.

"I believe so," her escort replies. "I understand it's going to get over. Redburn put it on. He always puts them over."

"By another Viennese, I see," observes an old gentleman.

"Adapted, of course, and spoiled," answers his wife. "They always are. Why can't they produce them as they're written?"

"Oh, Richard Niles is in it!" whispers a girl. "Isn't he *wonderful*?"

"A big boob!" scoffs her brother, and then opens his eyes at the sight of Sylvia's name. He has her picture, cut out of a magazine, in the back of his watch.

The orchestra files in, but the hubbub of subdued whispering and laughing does not cease. The overture begins. Hardly any one listens, though now and then somebody says:

"That's a catchy air!"

The house-lights finally die out and the footlights leap into life. A hush falls upon the house. On the stage, the stage-manager has clapped his hands twice and shouted:

"Clear!"

The play is about to begin.

Bucky, Reddy, and Alonzo leaned upon the rail at the back of the theater and watched the stage breathlessly over the tops of the spectators' heads. Their hearts beat fast. They hung upon every word—every move—every note. But Bucky's real torture did not commence until Sylvia's entrance.

He could have loved them for applauding her. He hated them for not laughing at her third line. He was like a madman when they encored her opening song. He clapped, and made the other fellows clap, until some people in the last row looked around at him; but he was too excited and happy to care.

At the end of her first love-scene with Niles, he felt tears smarting in his eyes. At the end of the act, he was weak from the strain.

There was quite a lot of applause. He rushed around in back, half delirious with joy, to find Sylvia in a sort of daze. Her blue eyes looked glassy. A smile was fixed upon her lips. She was shaking hands with people in the company who were congratulating her.

Bucky took her hands in his and kissed them, and she clung to him, breathing his name. Neither one of them had ever been so happy!

It was an effort to turn her over to her maid, and to order the woman not to let her exhaust her strength; but Bucky accomplished the feat, and hurried back to the foyer and smoking-room to hear what people were saying.

He met a lot of men he knew, and asked them to tell him frankly what they thought. He dodged the author and composer, who clung together in this emergency, though they usually fought desperately.

"Very pretty!" he heard a woman say.

"Charming!" said another woman.

"Stunning gowns," remarked a third.

"A little slow, eh?" from a man.

"Give me a serious play, something to make you *think*!" declared another.

"At least, it's *clean*!" murmured an elderly gentleman.

What the consensus of opinion was, he could hardly decide; but he was relieved to find everybody waiting for the second act. True, that might have been because there was nowhere else to go so early.

The second act had gone better at rehearsals than the first, but it did not go better to-night. There were holes in it,



weak spots, waits, scenes that dragged. One number, which everybody had thought would be a riot, didn't go at all. By the time the final curtain fell the audience was ready to leave.

Bucky, who had felt the falling barometer keenly, turned to Reddy and Alonzo in consternation.

"Well?" he asked.

"Needs fixing up," said Reddy.

"There's a lot of good stuff in it, though," added Alonzo.

Some of the audience liked it, some thought it only fair, others declared it to be all right for an evening's entertainment, but nothing extra—not what they'd call a good show. The author was confident. The composer was in the dumps. The company was on the fence—eager to ask each newcomer what he thought. The company-manager and the stage-director assured Bucky that it could be knocked into shape if he was willing to keep it out of New York for a few weeks and get a good "play-doctor" to pull it together. They suggested several promising candidates.

Bucky got one man on the long-distance telephone, and arranged for him to come on at once. The author made violent protest, but was ruled out, and he surrendered when he saw the criticism next morning. The local newspaper thought well of the show, but admitted that much had still to be done to it before it would be suitable for New York.

Everybody awaited the coming of the play-doctor with some anxiety, knowing that rehearsals would begin all over again. But most of them knew the fellow from other shows, and had faith in him; so, on the whole, the outlook seemed hopeful.

Show people are the greatest, most consistent optimists in the world.

A week of misery ensued. When they weren't playing they were rehearsing; when they weren't rehearsing, they were traveling. The show was a big one to move, and the route laid out for them by the booking-office necessitated long

jumps. Moreover, business was very poor, and nearly all the expenses had to come out of Bucky's pocket.

He found out that the initial cost of production isn't the worst of putting on a show. Keeping the thing going until it can come into New York, or Boston, or Chicago, is the worst.

However, Bucky wasn't discouraged. Bad hotels, empty theaters, incessant rehearsing, endless demands for money, failed to shake his belief in the play and in Sylvia as a theatrical investment. There is no telling how long the adventure might have lasted but for a wire from Gladwin, which reached him in Atlantic City during the last week in July.

"Come at once. Imperative!" it said.

## CHAPTER XIV

### SOME UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENTS

BUCKY's first sensation, upon receipt of the telegram, was one of annoyance. He didn't at all like being called away from the show and from Sylvia in that fashion, especially as things were fairly pleasant at the shore resort, the hotel was comfortable, and the bathing was perfect. But a long-distance conversation with Gladwin failing to elicit any intelligible information, Bucky realized that there was nothing to do but to go, especially as he needed more money in order to move the show on Saturday night to Boston.

So Sylvia accompanied him to the station and kissed him good-by. Reddy supplied him with books and magazines and saw that he got his parlor-car seat all right, and the others waved to him from the station-platform as long as he was visible.

All this happened early on Wednesday morning. In the afternoon he was in Gladwin's office, facing that doughty gentleman across an expanse of mahogany desk and piles of legal-looking papers.

"I'm sorry if my hasty summons interfered with your holiday," said Gladwin, leaning back and surveying Bucky

critically through his black-rimmed glasses; "but things have reached such a serious pass here that I dared not venture the slightest move in your affairs without your complete understanding and sanction."

"Yes?" said Bucky, by way of encouragement, a slightly anxious frown shadowing his face.

"When you came into your inheritance," went on Gladwin, tapping monotonously upon the blotting-pad with a paper-knife, "I explained to you, you will remember, that the greater part of your income was derived from railroads and mines in Mexico. In times of peace and prosperity, no more sound or profitable investment could be found; but since this unsettled condition has existed down there, and since our government has become involved, there has been practically no income from your holdings. Thinking the difficulty down there but a temporary one, and not wishing to interfere with your plans in any way, I was able to keep you supplied with such money as you required by disposing of a few odd lots of other securities left to you by your great-uncle; but I have now exhausted this means of raising funds, and as our Mexican entanglement shows no signs of coming to a speedy end, I deemed it wise to summon you and explain exactly what your situation is."

"I see," nodded Bucky; "and just what is it?"

"You have properties and holdings to the value of—something like five millions," said Gladwin quietly. "That is, under normal conditions, five millions would not be an unreasonable appraisal. But at the present moment, you would be lucky to get two millions clear. The mines are not working, and there is no immediate prospect of their resuming. The railroad has been seriously damaged. If you could afford to hang on to what you've got, you would in time be able to recoup your losses; but I am afraid such a course is going to prove impossible, since you have no other income, and since

your personal expenses are so large. However, there is a way out of your difficulties, if you are disposed to run the risk attached to it."

"What risk?" asked Bucky. "What sort of risk?"

"I'll tell you," said Gladwin. "I have been offered by Isaac P. Gordon—representing his own little clique, of course—a million and a half for your Mexican interests. It is quite possible that I can induce him to add something to that, if you are willing to sell. Then, with the cash realized, you could invest in Amalgamated Steel. I am informed through fairly reliable sources that Amalgamated Steel is going to get the government contracts for guns and armor-plate, and that several big war-orders are certain to be landed on the other side. If that is the case, the stock is going to take a big jump, and it would be easy to invest your capital so that you would be richer than ever. However, there is this to be considered—the contracts may not be landed; the stock may not boom; instead, it may drop. That's the risk I spoke of."

Bucky looked dubious.

"Well, how sure are you that it would be a good buy? Just how reliable is your tip?"

Gladwin smiled.

"No tips are reliable," he answered. "All you can do is to size up the chances for yourself, and gamble. I have been so much impressed with the future of Amalgamated Steel, however, that I have invested in it personally."

"That proves that you believe in it, then, doesn't it?" observed Bucky simply. "Now let me see. If I hang on in Mexico—"

"No income at all for some time to come—I can't say how long. You'd have to modify your mode of life."

"Give up my country place, my yacht, my show," mused Bucky gloomily.

"That is certain. If I invest in Amalgamated Steel, I may come out much richer, or I may come out with nothing at all!"

"Oh, you'd have something," protested Gladwin, "but nothing compared with what you had."

Bucky hesitated. He didn't like the thought of giving up his luxurious way of living. He didn't like the idea of closing the show, either.

In fact, it was the thought of closing the show that decided him. He simply couldn't lie down and accept defeat so calmly. He must hang on until the show was a success and Sylvia had had her chance. Every one depended absolutely upon him. If he got out from under, the show couldn't last a week. The whole mob would blame him, for success really seemed close at last. The houses were better in Atlantic City, and the criticisms were good.

"Do you want a little time to think it over or to make investigations on your own account?" asked Gladwin amiably. "Do you want to seek advice outside? I don't want to rush you."

"No," answered Bucky slowly. "I—I'll try my luck in Amalgamated Steel. No use shilly-shallying!"

Bucky knew nothing of finance, or his answer might have been different. As it was, he was helpless in Gladwin's hands. He swallowed hard and ignored the sinking sensation deep within him.

"You have definitely decided?" pursued the lawyer.

"Yes."

"You'll take your chances?"

"Yes."

"I don't think you'll regret it—in the end," said Gladwin, nodding. "Will you write an order, please?"

"An order?" repeated Bucky.

"Authorizing me to sell out your Mexican interests and to buy Amalgamated Steel with the proceeds of the sale."

"Oh, yes, I see. Certainly!"

Bucky took the pen and paper that Gladwin offered him and wrote as the older man had requested. Then he rose and stood looking down uncertainly at the lawyer.

"How soon shall I know?" he asked.

"Oh, we may know within a very few days—I couldn't say exactly."

Bucky drew a long breath.

"I suppose I may as well go back, then. I can't do any good hanging around here. You can wire me, or get me on the long-distance, as soon as there's any news."

"Yes, most likely that would be best," admitted Gladwin.

They shook hands then and parted. As Bucky passed through the anteroom he heard that the operator at the switch-board was already being instructed to call Mr. Isaac P. Gordon.

He went directly to the station, took the first train he could get, and was back in Atlantic City that same night in time to take supper, as usual, with Sylvia.

He said nothing to her or to any one about the financial difficulties in which he found himself, but became at once as much absorbed in the show as possible. And he strove valiantly to hope for the best—to keep from worrying.

So Thursday passed, and Friday; and Saturday came. Bucky had refrained from asking Gladwin for money enough to move the show, on the chance that the steel deal would go through in time, or that there would be enough money in the box-office to manage with; but though they had had a good week—good, that is, in comparison with previous weeks—there wasn't enough left, after paying up, to cover all expenses. Reddy Wheeler so informed Bucky in the morning, after counting up the advance sales and estimating what the window-sale would come to; but Bucky determined to wait until the afternoon to hear from Gladwin.

In the afternoon he heard. The wire from Gladwin was brief but perfectly clear, leaving absolutely no room for uncertainty:

Contracts lost—Amalgamated Steel raided by bear operators—Regret to inform you practically everything lost.—GLADWIN.

*(To be continued in the December number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)*

# An Explanation Before the Lord

by E.B. Dewing

THE doctor offered to take me home.

"If you don't mind these wet roads at night," he said, "I can drop you in town almost as quickly as the midnight train can put you there."

I thanked him.

"Don't thank me. I've made so many night runs alone, I confess I'm rather tired of them. I prefer company if I can get it."

Our hostess was, as usual, polite about it having been kind of us to come out so far, and we assured her that we had been more than repaid for our trouble. The music had been good, the punch proper, the girls of an age when you might be certain they wouldn't take you seriously, and yet at the same time sufficiently young to make it worth your while to try and discover just how seriously they would take you. If it were not for the distance and the sure arrival of the next day's work, we should have been sorry to leave.

"Quite a party!" I commented, as we turned out into the main road.

"Yes, indeed!"

"Harmless enough, but jolly good fun."

"Parties like that are always harmless; but I must be growing old, for I don't enjoy them as I used to. With you young chaps it's different."



I was hardly an infant. Indeed, the doctor confessed that it might not be a matter of years.

"It's the biggest price we pay for our profession—the early loss of our illusions. I feel a good deal like the character in an old fable who was rewarded for his deeds by having his eyes rubbed with a magic ointment. Don't you remember those fairy ointments that make you see things invisible to the less fortunate? It's a doubtful sort of reward. I always put it in the bill."

"You mean you make a charge against your patients for the ideals they've shattered?"

"Yes. For professional services rendered, a certain sum—and then, another account for loss of human faith."

"Perhaps you know too much?"

"A great deal!"

I took a liberty—considering the fact of my never having seen Dr. Greet before that night.

"I'm afraid a number of people besides doctors think they know too much," I said, at the risk of seeming rude.

"Of course they do—about their own affairs; but they're not filled up with a lot of private stuff which is none of their business."

"In a non-Catholic community doctors and lawyers must expect to take the place of father confessors," I suggested.



"That's all right, too; but sometimes they go too far."

"You mean your patients tell you secrets you think they oughtn't?"

"I should say they did!"

Dr. Greet wasn't the type of man I should have talked with freely. He looked clever enough, but he was at once too nervous and too abrupt. I certainly should never have asked his advice.

He spoke far down into the turned-up collar of his coat.

"I should say they did," he repeated. "I don't mind being a physician; I don't even mind being, as you say, a father confessor. But I do mind having to act as God!"

We rolled along in silence for a while, my companion paying strict attention to his driving. The road swung sharply. From the outer curve there was a straight drop down to the level of the river-bottom land below, but we were protected by a stone wall built rather unnecessarily high. Our lights showed it plainly.

"That used to be a bad corner before they built the wall," he said.

Vaguely I recalled something out of the limbo where the sensations of past years are lost.

"Wasn't it along here," I asked, "that those people were killed—a man and his wife and another man? It was a cloudy night after rain—dark and wet—and their automobile ran over the edge, I think."

"It was just here. Were they friends of yours?"

"No," I said. "I don't even remember their names."

"There was a good deal of talk about it at the time. The road commissioners were thought to be responsible. That's why they spent so much money on the wall."

"If I remember, the three of them were instantly killed. They were found crushed to death under the wreckage."

The doctor told me that I had it a little wrong.

"Two of them were killed. The man

who'd been running the machine was taken to the hospital to die more comfortably. You didn't know any of them, did you?"

"I've told you I didn't. Did you?"

"Yes, in a manner of speaking. I had the honor of finishing the job that the accident began. The poor fellow's legs were crushed, and I cut them off all tidy and nice."

"Did he die?"

"Finally."

It seemed that he was the husband of the woman, and there surely wouldn't have been much joy for him had he lived.

"Both his legs gone, and his wife and his friend crushed to a jelly—I can't see how I was so very far wrong in the first place. He must have thought he was dead—"

"As a matter of fact," the doctor interrupted me, "he did."

"I don't understand—"

"It's the case I referred to a little while ago, when I said I didn't like having to act as God. After I had carved him up, as he was coming out of the ether, he thought he was talking to his Maker."

"Did he repent his sins," I said, "and ask to be forgiven?"

"No, he didn't repent or ask to be forgiven. He just told an extraordinarily straight story—a good deal straighter, you know, than he would have told if he'd known that he was still on this earth."

"From what you say I gather that if he had known that, he probably wouldn't have told it at all."

But Dr. Greet wasn't listening. He changed the subject rather abruptly.

"I'm leaving here next week," he said.

"You are? Where are you going?"

"I've succeeded in getting a job at the Serbian front. You've no idea how difficult those things are to manage, but I happened to pull the right wires, and I've had some experience in rough and ready surgery. I'm going very quietly, so I'll thank you not to mention it. I told you because I wanted you to know

that otherwise—that is, if I hadn't been going away—I shouldn't have mentioned anything peculiar about the man who was killed. We're supposed to keep our mouths shut when we see anything strange—"

"It must be strange in a way, seeing a man who thinks he's dead; but, after all, it's nothing to his discredit, is it?"

"It was to his discredit before he finished what he had to say—though even that depends upon the point of view. He should never have asked me to be his judge!"

I admitted that I was glad he hadn't asked me.

"Why do you say that? I haven't told you—"

"No, but I hope you're going to. As long as you're starting for the Serbian front, you may not have the chance again, and I sha'n't have the chance to hear. Confessions aren't commonplaces to me. I'm only a clerk in a broker's office."

The doctor was emphatic.

"For which, young man, you can thank whatever kind of Providence you believe in most!"

Dr. Greet made no further apologies. It is for me, in turn, to apologize for not having learned his story better. As I said, I am only a clerk in a broker's office, and I haven't the art of transcribing what little I may know.

The following tale stands twice removed from the truth. It comes, first, through Dr. Greet—who didn't, as it will be easy to see, tell me the whole of it—and then through me. You must try to imagine it in the original, pushing up, as it were, through the evaporating ether.

## II

"THE man was very young, all things considered—not more than thirty, I believe he said—and he'd been married ever since he was a mere boy. He made a great deal of how young he felt himself to be, and how, marrying as he did, he had never seen the world quite as other men see it.

"He referred to his wife as Pinkie. You know the kind of woman who would ordinarily be called Pinkie, but in her case it seemed to be more a question of a baby name continuing in use. She'd never had a chance to grow up, any more than he had. Children of their own would have helped them both, but somehow there never were any. He said she was afraid; and during the very early years of their marriage they were both so young that children would have been like an anachronism.

"They both had money—I mean property which paid them an income without their doing anything about it. Besides having this he was in business. I don't know what it was. He never told me. It had nothing to do with the subject in hand—the explanation he was trying to make. It must have been something which took him away occasionally, because he would go off and she would be left alone. He made a good deal of her being left alone.

"They had quite an elaborate apartment on Riverside Drive. He spoke of the pink-satin curtains in the parlor, and the satin-covered furniture, and the polish of the floor—so bright that you could almost see your face in it. He was as fond of that kind of thing as she was."

"He took a pride in it?" I asked.

"No, I think not; but it suited his taste. They didn't belong to what you call the Four Hundred. They weren't rich enough or mannered enough, and they didn't have any particular desire for social honors; but they liked to mix with others of their kind who had money to spend and a good appetite for gaiety. Theaters, you know, parties, food at unusual hours, polite gambling. They all had cars, and in spring and autumn they were always making up expeditions for Sundays and holidays, and tripping it out to the hotels and restaurants that have sprung up by the roadsides in response to the demand for such places. You know how it is—the women give a great deal of care to their dress, and try

to outrival one another in the latest veils and hats.

"Our young couple were evidently popular in their set. Everybody liked them, because they were so simple—they really enjoyed themselves, and most of the others were only pretending. They were perfectly open-minded and gay, and yet perfectly good. In that sort of crowd there's always some one who gets bored and oversteps the bounds in one direction or another—one of those terribly logical fools who can't see what it's all for, except for that—but they never did. They were never bored. Here was my patient, thrashing about so that we had to hold him for fear his bandages would slip, and protesting at the top of his lungs that he and his wife had the best reputation of any of their acquaintance!

"I discovered one realization which came to him out there in what he thought was the void. I've spoken of logical fools. He wasn't logical in the way I meant, but at last he knew himself for what he was—"

"I should think it would have taken something less than death to make him see that he was a fool!"

The doctor ignored my interruption.

"He expected to know a lot of things which, of course, he couldn't find out. He kept asking me questions I couldn't possibly answer, and he grew quite angry with me because I couldn't. You see, he thought I merely wouldn't. Almost the very first thing he said, when he began to talk, was to ask me why Pinkie had done it. I didn't have the slightest idea what it was she had done, so I could hardly tell him. It was the last thing he said, too, and I hope he found out to his satisfaction!"

"What was it she had done? You haven't told me."

"She had been unfaithful. He wanted to know why, although he could understand her being unfaithful better than he could understand how she had been able to go on toward himself as if noth-

ing were the matter. It was evidently the last thing either he or anybody else could possibly have suspected of her."

"I thought you said they hadn't overstepped the bounds."

"They hadn't, up to that point."

"He happened to find it out?"

"Yes, he found it out like the third act of a play. It was so much like a play that I shouldn't have believed it—the setting, the time, the old, worn wires of the situation—I shouldn't have believed it, except that it was different from a play in possessing a detail which no writer could have invented. Besides, my man was delirious, and when people are delirious they don't invent—they don't even repeat the inventions of others. They tell the truth that is nearest their hearts, and they tell every little part of the truth.

"He didn't miss any of it. I sent the nurse out of the room. I couldn't stay there in the room with her, and some one had to stay. I took a chance on holding him alone; he didn't have to be held all the time."

### III

DR. GREET seemed to be searching about in his mind for a point at which to begin.

"Have you ever seen one of those phonographs," he said at last, "that will receive records as well as play them? They were very popular a number of years ago. You talk into them, or sing, or anything you like, and then the record you've made is turned out for you and your friends to listen to. Well, it was like that with him.

"It seems that he'd been away on one of his trips, and he came home a day or so before he had expected to come. He arrived in the evening, and let himself in with his latch-key very quietly, thinking to surprise his precious Pinkie. He did surprise her, or at least he would have done so if she had seen him. He saw her.

"This was how. I learned about the pink-satin curtains and the furniture and

the polished floor. There were pale little water-colors in gilt frames. There was a china clock which ticked. There was a mirror over the mantel. There was a little web of dust under the sofa, which the maid had neglected to remove. It all made the impression on him of which I've spoken, like a record in a phonograph.

"Perhaps it was more like taking a picture. He couldn't have stayed much longer than the opening and shutting of a lens. He was afraid they'd see him standing there, but they didn't, and presently he found himself out in the street. He accused me of thinking him a coward for not having gone right in then to face it; but he said he couldn't—he couldn't if he'd wanted to. I imagine, at times like that, people do only what they can."

"Did he go away again?"

"Not very far. He went back to the Grand Central Station and telephoned home of his arrival. By the time he returned everything was lovely. Pinkie had gone into the kitchen herself and prepared a nice little supper for him—it was the cook's evening out—and she sat down on the same side of the table with him, and put her arm around him, and told him how she'd missed him. If you had asked me, I should have said everything was just a little too lovely."

"And he didn't say anything?"

"Never a word! He couldn't. A man who has been knocked down by a safe dropped from the top of a ten-story building doesn't say anything, does he?"

"And she didn't say anything?"

"Haven't I made it clear that she didn't? The next evening the man came to call—to see if things were all right, I suppose. Perhaps you'll ask me whether he said anything, either. Pinkie's husband seemed to go out of his way to be polite."

"I wanted to be polite to him—I didn't want him to know—I wasn't ready—I wanted time—I didn't know what to do—I had to think—I was

afraid something would happen, and I wasn't ready—"

"He kept repeating how he wasn't ready. If I had been his judge, which I wasn't, I should have classed him as a pretty weak apology for a human being. Any one would have thought, to hear him go on, that he'd been the one with something to conceal. This condition of inertia must have lasted nearly a week. As he said, he didn't know what to do, but the more the hours went by the less he knew. He couldn't stand being with his wife, and he couldn't stand being away from her. He was afraid that when he wasn't there himself, the other fellow was."

"Why didn't he go away and take the other man with him?"

"Oh, he couldn't have stood that either. He would leave home very early in the morning, drive round town until his office was open, stop there and get his mail, say he'd be back at a certain hour, and go out again. He wasn't in any condition to work. He gave his business associates—I don't know whether they were his employers or he employed them—no excuse for being away. Two or three times a day he would go to his office and see what there was for him, and the rest of the time he would be driving around. He must have gone hundreds of miles—in the city, in the country, everywhere—and all the time thinking."

"Can't you see what an inferno he must have been in, sitting in that car of his, which had so often carried him under such different conditions, and always coming back like a kite tied to a string? Sometimes, as I say, he would stop at his office, and as the day wore on he would go to his house. In the evening it would be the same—in and out. He even went to parties—engagements previously made. He always progressed along the line of least resistance."

"It seems that he had known the man for years, and had thought him rather a good sort. As for his wife, he simply



couldn't understand. He blamed himself. He was on the edge of telling her that he knew, and talking it over with her. Perhaps she had got into some trouble, and he could help her out of it. But he couldn't get himself up to the sticking-point. You see, he didn't know how long it had been going on. That was one of the questions he asked me. He felt he didn't know anything now. He felt that the whole fabric of his little existence was breaking up.

" 'You see,' he explained to me, 'there wasn't anything for me to do but to die. And here I am!'

"It was the first word he had said which made me know definitely that the accident hadn't been entirely the road commissioners' fault."

"He ran over the embankment purposely, then?"

"Yes."

A machine passed us, having rather a zigzagging time of it in the mud, and the occupants were singing. They recalled a possibility.

"A man in the condition of mind you describe," I said, "usually goes and gets drunk."

"I know that. He spoke of it, but he wasn't a drinking man. Liquor didn't suit him. He hadn't any vices, in the ordinary sense; but he had an inordinate vanity. It was the thing which hurt him most in the whole situation. His vanity was all shot to pieces. It was his wife's fault, partly—I mean his being vain. She had flattered him and flattered him—"

"She flattered him to his death," I ventured.

"You think that if he hadn't been so vain he wouldn't have killed himself? It seems to me she pretty effectually stopped flattering him. He was a selfish little man. It came to him that he wanted to die. He took them with him, because he couldn't stand not taking them. He didn't have any particular desire for revenge.

"The shaping up of his scheme—

taking them in the car and running it over the edge in the dark—he thought out on one of those days when he was raging about like a weasel in a trap, using gasoline and tires and all the things it costs good money to produce. He raged about a little longer before he could get himself to the point, and he found out that if he didn't do it then, he never would. He arranged it that night—it was a night a good deal like this—and he took them out to a new restaurant where they give you a chicken dinner for two dollars. You know—Virginia ham, fried chicken, vegetables in season, darkies to sing and play, drinks extra. That meal must have stuck in his throat, because he remembered all about it."

I had an idle curiosity.

"Who paid the check?" I asked.

"He did—it was his party. He gave the waiter ten dollars, and wouldn't take any change. He put five dollars into the hat the darkies passed. You see he was liberal, and he would probably have been still more liberal if he hadn't been afraid of making himself conspicuous. When a man is about to commit murder and suicide he doesn't want to start a fuss. But at that his wife must have been a fool not to have seen that something was wrong."

"Perhaps she was afraid, too."

"Perhaps she was; I hadn't thought. 'Pinkie,' he said to her, 'do you love me?' She must have been surprised, but she answered him straight: 'Why, of course I love you!' 'Ah, you see, my wife loves me!'

"It wasn't the kind of conversation people usually have in public, and he hadn't been drinking. The darkies struck up that old syncopated song: 'It's delightful—to be married—d-d-d-d-d-d-d-de-lightful—' Don't you remember, a lot of hesitation about the 'd'? Then he had a terrible fear that when he arrived at the edge of the cliff he would run his machine along past it."

"But he didn't!"

"No. He must have gone over quite slowly and deliberately. His wife was in the front seat with him, where she always sat. There was a rock-pile at the bottom—a gang of Italians had been blasting for the railroad. He spoke of gliding out into space and dropping. His wife screamed and clutched him. He had an idea he would tell her then, but after that he couldn't. He spoke of hearing voices. It must have been the people who lived in some little houses by the river, and who came out after they heard the crash. He spoke of a strong light in his eyes. The doctor they managed to summon had an electric flash. He spoke of little lights passing back and forth.

" 'Souls!' he said to me. 'Aren't they souls?'

"When he had come to the end of his story he seemed to lose interest in this life on earth. He asked me questions that I couldn't answer about the here-after. Then, as I said, he asked me again why Pinkie had done it. I couldn't tell him. And then he put his hands over his face and went to sleep. He was pretty well exhausted by his delirium and loss of blood. There was I with a confessed murderer on my hands—an attempted suicide—a man who had lost his wife in more ways than one, and with both legs cut off above the knees—"

"I believe you said you had sent the nurse out of the room?"

"Yes. She didn't know."

"You were alone?"

"I was."

We were in town now. I hadn't noticed our approach. We were gliding past the high-numbered streets along the upper reaches of Broadway.

"If you'll give me your address, I'll take you there," said Dr. Greet. "I might as well, you know, as long as I've brought you so far."

I thanked him. I was much obliged.

"Oh, don't thank me. I sha'n't have much more chance to oblige any one. Next week I start for Saloniki."

"You told me. I wish you luck!"

"I'm not going for luck."

We drew up in front of the apartment-building where I live with my mother and sister. My sister works in a public library, and my mother keeps house.

"You knew that I was alone with the man at the hospital?"

"I did. I think you said he died?"

The doctor looked at me. He was a large man, and his bulk loomed in the sharp whiteness and blackness cast by the street lamp.

"Yes, he died. He did not live to come fully out of the ether. A good many people don't, you know, after an operation like that, and in that case there was no reason why I should raise the average. Well, I'll say good-by. I probably sha'n't see you again. When I go to the East, I am not planning to come back."

### A DREAM OF HAPPINESS

IN the blue haven of your eyes  
A little dream at anchor lies,  
Stirred only by the ebb and flow  
Of soft-winged thoughts that come and go.

I know not whence it sails, nor where,  
But that its present port is fair;  
It could not find a sweeter goal  
Than the white wonder of your soul!

The winds of heaven will surely bless  
This little dream of happiness,  
Whose fairy bark at anchor lies  
In the blue haven of your eyes!

*Winifred Sutcliffe Duncan*

# Sneak's Shrift

by Horatio Winslow



AS the jurymen shuffled to their feet, the murmurings of the court-room faded into a tense silence. Paul Brent felt his heart thumping with a rapidity that surprised him, while from the tail of his eye he glimpsed Blanchard, chalk-faced and weak, clinging to his chair.

The foreman spoke slowly, giving every word its solemn weight.

"We, the jury, find the defendant, Emory Blanchard, *not* guilty of the murder of William Brent!"

From the silence bubbled a half-hearted murmur which might have swelled into applause had not the judge rapped sharply with his gavel. As for Blanchard, his face blossomed into a sudden red as he rushed almost boisterously to the lawyer who defended him.

"Paul, I—I can't tell you how I feel about this! I—well, you've done the biggest thing for me that one man ever did for another!"

Listlessly the lawyer for the defense shook the proffered hand.

The end of the emotionally exhausting trial had left him impervious to praise and blame. His only feeling was a vast relief that it was over. He could not even summon a smile to greet Cardell, the district attorney who had opposed him.

"It's over, Paul," said Cardell; "so let's forget it. You're a wonder! There aren't many men who would have defended Blanchard, under the circumstances, and I respect you for taking the case. But, Paul"—he sank his voice to a whisper—"though as a member of the community I'm glad to assume that Blanchard is innocent, just the same, if it hadn't been for the way you handled the case, right now Emory Blanchard would be on his way to the death-cell!"

Remote, apathetic, Brent gathered his papers into the green bag to tramp down the court-house steps and up the main street of the little Western city. It was over. Distasteful as the task had been, it was over. In clearing Blanchard he had also cleared the dead man—cleared his own younger brother.

The boy hadn't been murdered. Why should any one have wished to murder him? And to accuse Blanchard, the boy's partner and close friend, had been slanderous not only to Blanchard but to the dead man himself.

Death had come from an accident, and in freeing Blanchard Paul Brent had proved that it was an accident and at the same time had rescued an innocent man. He had done well, but it was over now. Yes, it was over—

With a start he caught himself whirling round again on the endless circle. He pulled himself to a halt only by grace of a desperate bit of will-power. He felt utterly worn out, his brain refusing all consecutive thought and doing no more than to muddle the confused messages telegraphed from eyes and ears. So it was with a shock of surprise that he suddenly found himself once more at his office desk staring at a long, white envelope.

Not until he had slit the end and tumbled out a second envelope wrapped in a sheet of note-paper did he realize that the letter was not addressed to him, but to William Brent, his dead brother. The pain of the loss cut him freshly as he read:

DEAR MR. BRENT:

I am returning your letter addressed to my partner, Mr. Kelsey. As a result of a nervous breakdown Mr. Kelsey is in a sanatorium. More than a month ago I forwarded your letter there, and I supposed Mr. Kelsey had read it before he was placed *incomunicado* by the doctors; so it was with surprise as well as regret that I received it from the sanatorium this morning. It has not been opened, as you will see. Trusting you have not been too seriously inconvenienced, I am,

Very truly yours,

ERNEST MORTON.

Wonderingly Paul Brent picked up the unopened envelope. It was a voice from the dead. According to the stamped date, it must have been mailed on the morning of the boy's death. "Urgent and important and personal" had been scrawled in an energetic fist across the end of the envelope, which was addressed to Howard T. Kelsey.

Though Paul had never met Kelsey, the name was familiar to him as that of a young attorney who had been his younger brother's roommate at Dartmouth—a friend to whom the boy told his troubles.

As a sudden suspicion vexed his composure, Brent tore open the envelope.

DEAR OLD KELSEY:

I'm breaking my long silence to let you know how things are by me.

Weather—sunshiny.

Crops—good.

Trouble—coming my way fast.

My partner's name is Blanchard. I don't know why he's my partner. He blew into town with some good letters, and before I could defend myself I found we were partners in the real-estate business. Honest, I don't remember a thing till I wakes up in my corner and finds the fight's over.

Now here's the trouble. I had the money and he hadn't; but I figured his personality offset that. He's the get-there type, and once he sets his heart on a thing nothing turns him aside. All right! But lately his bookkeeping has had holes in it, and I've stumbled on a couple of queer outside matters that set me thinking. Getting down to brass tacks, Kelse, I've a notion he'd like our sign to read just "Blanchard, Real Estate."

I can't prove a thing against him. Once I'd have said said that at the worst it would end in a shoulder-to-shoulder slugging-match, and let the best man win. Now I'm not so sure. The books and other goshawful suspicious things say no. If Blanchard is a sneak underneath, and if he feels it necessary to eliminate me—well, I shall probably be eliminated and no questions asked.

I can't tell old Paul about this, because outside the court-room Paul is as simple as a child. Besides, Paul rather likes Blanchard; golfs with him every day. Understand, Kelse, I'm not looking for any long-distance prescription. I want you to knock off your other work for two weeks, come out and look at the lay of the land, and then give me your decision as to whether your old college chump is in cahoots with a square partner or a murdering sneak.

Paul Brent dropped the letter, to stare blindly at the wall. The sentiment of an angered community had condemned Emory Blanchard before the trial; but Brent, because he believed the man innocent, had yielded to solicitations and defended the accused man in the heart-breaking, nerve-tearing ordeal that followed. And he had won; he had placed Emory Blanchard beyond the reach of the law.

Suddenly there came to him one of those explosions of inspiration that characterized his mental life. No longer a lawyer for the defense, he visioned a thousand and one living details which Cardell should have seen but did not; which bias had kept him from seeing him-



self. The confusion of the janitor on the witness-stand; the hole in the identification that established the defendant's alibi; Blanchard's hazy past—like iron leaping to a magnet, a chain of indirect but damning evidence linked and tightened about the man.

As Paul Brent stood there, lips pressed tight together, exultant, yet bitterly self-accusing, the telephone-bell rang. Boggled in doubt, he made no move toward the instrument.

What could he do? Blanchard had been acquitted by a jury of his peers, and in the eyes of the law was an innocent man. But—

The bell rang again, and mechanically he answered it.

"Hello, Paul!" It was Blanchard's suety voice. "Called you up because I thought you might like to try a round of the links to-morrow afternoon. How about it? Get your nerves back in shape again."

For the tick of a moment the lawyer saw red. Then a sudden panorama unfurled itself before his mental vision—a diagram, a plan for the future; the plan by which Blanchard should be made to prove himself innocent or—a sneak and guilty!

"Surely I'll be there!" Brent answered easily. "And, Blanchard, how would you like to talk over a fishing-trip? You know that shack of mine up in northern Wisconsin?"

## II

THE canoe grated on the pebbles as Blanchard jumped from the bow to run her in. They divided the duffel and started on the trail toward the ridge, Brent leading and carrying the light double-barreled shotgun. A climb of less than fifteen minutes brought them to the little cabin that stood on the island's backbone, and within another fifteen minutes a meal was on the table.

The last stage of the trip had been marked by strenuous paddling, so they ate abundantly, Blanchard showing the

more appetite. As the lawyer finished the last of his coffee, he leaned across the table.

Blanchard," he said deliberately, "did you ever realize what a sneak you are?"

Blanchard expressed himself in an uncertain smile, and then raised a match to his cigarette.

"I never knew you were a humorist—Paul!"

His voice was less suave than the words it embodied.

"I'm like all good humorists—I tell the truth, and the truth is always funny. Blanchard, you're a sneak!"

Judged by his manner, Brent might have been jesting. Blanchard laid down his cigarette and assumed a ponderous frown.

"If you think I'm going to stay here and stand for any such line of talk as that, you're wrong! I may be indebted to you for—"

"I'll give you a receipt for that debt," said Brent. "All I ask you to do is to sit quietly here till I finish. If you don't—"

He dropped his hand significantly upon the double-barreled shotgun. Blanchard raised his eyebrows in polite but disgusted resignation.

"You're a sneak!" Brent repeated. "I haven't the evidence to convince a jury that you're a sneak, but I believe it heart and soul. And if you're a sneak—and everything tends to prove that you are"—Brent thrust his chin aggressively from the shelter of his coat lapels—"then you are the treacherous sneak who murdered my brother!"

Unable to speak, Blanchard bristled across the table, but Brent's eyes had narrowed to a blue flicker of hate which Blanchard saw and shrank from.

"Don't waste words trying to crawl out of it! My brother was killed by a blow from behind—a blow that ended him while he was sitting in his chair. At the trial I proved that it was an accident. I know now that it wasn't, though the man

who did the killing had set the stage to make it look like one. And I know now that the alibi we proved at the trial—the alibi that knocked Cardell off his feet—was just a case of chance resemblance. But it did the trick; it fooled me, it fooled Cardell, and it saved you.”

Brent leaned back in his chair, laughing ironically.

“You’re crazy!” said Blanchard, after an uneasy stirring. “But if that’s what you think, I’ll get out. I’m certainly not going to stick in a place while you peddle that line of talk to your friends! I’ll go away and never come back.”

Brent laughed, this time a little more genially.

“One of us is going away and never coming back,” he said.

“What do you mean?” Blanchard’s pupils were bull’s-eyes in circles of white.

“I mean that before to-night comes either I shall have killed you or you will have killed me!”

Blanchard’s face grew pasty. He tried to swallow and failed.

“But the law—the law—”

“I fully believe I cheated the law.” Brent’s voice was ruthless. “Yes, I cheated the law, and now I’m going to appeal to an older law, which says ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’”

From the open duffel-bag he brought out two paper-swathed cylinders.

“Your choice, Blanchard!”

When the other refused the proffered object, Brent placed it on the table and began to break the strings that tied it.

“You see, Blanchard, it’s a knife—a long hunting-knife—exactly like this one that I’m keeping for myself. I’m going to give you a chance, a last chance, Blanchard, to play fair. This morning I could have drowned you a dozen times, but I wanted to give you a final fling at *not* being a sneak!”

Blanchard tried to protest, but his throat failed him.

“We’re alone here on a small island. You can’t swim; if you try to make a raft of a log, you’ll be drowned in the

rapids; and first of all I’ll scuttle the canoe. We’re going to strip to the waist; you’re going to take one knife, and I’m going to take the other; and three days from now, when the guide comes with a load of provisions, there’ll be only one of us alive.”

Blanchard made a noise of protest, but no coherent words came.

“In case you kill me”—Brent drew out a small black note-book—“I’m leaving this diary, in which I confess to a growing homicidal mania. That will get you clear. In case I kill *you*—well, I’ll take a chance!”

Blanchard sat immovable in his chair, mouth open, eyes staring. As Brent peeled coat and shirt, he caught the other stealing covetous glances toward the side of the table.

“Hurry up, Blanchard! The sooner it’s begun the sooner it will end. That’s right—get started!”

As they stood before the shack, bare-chested in the afternoon sun, Brent gave his parting word.

“Blanchard, I feel that I have a perfect right to take your life without mercy, but instead I’m giving you better than an even break. I know nothing about knife-fighting, and you’re a younger man than I am.”

The two men contrasted strangely. Brent, wiry and lean, faced Blanchard, who was broader of chest and three inches taller, his big waist offset by well-muscled arms. The sight of his antagonist seemed to give Blanchard confidence, for he gripped his knife more firmly and scowled with a terrifying grimace.

“Do you accept the style of fighting that I propose?” demanded Brent. “Knife to knife?”

“I accept,” growled Blanchard.

Brent’s smile was enigmatic.

“Play fair!” he warned.

Blanchard turned, stumbling down the western slope toward the thick-growing birch, while Brent wheeled toward the east shore of the island. Just before the lawyer dropped from sight, he looked

back and observed without surprise that Blanchard had stopped and was covertly watching him.

## III

THE descent to the canoe took less time than the climb to the shack. Brent crouched over the craft for a second; then, instead of slashing it full of holes, he gently and deliberately drew it farther from the lapping current.

Next he stared questioningly at the hunting-knife; pondered for a moment; and with a quick sweep of his arm tossed it into the canoe. Unguarded and weaponless, he started back along the trail.

If the man were *not* a sneak, if the thousandth possibility proved a fact, if he had misjudged Blanchard—well—he shrugged his shoulders. In such improbable event Blanchard might and could revenge himself as he pleased. But Blanchard *was* a sneak! Not for a second did the lawyer doubt the issue of the test.

He had struck the clearing twenty-five yards from the shack when Blanchard's voice brought him to a sudden halt. As he had suspected, the man had made a pretense of going to the west, only to return to the shack.

"Stop!"

There was a gust of triumph in the word. Brent stood still, while Blanchard emerged from the shadow of the little house, holding in his hands not the steel blade, but Brent's double-barreled shotgun. The sun glistened on the light, graceful barrels.

"Shoe's on the other foot now! How about it?" he jeered.

Brent lifted his chin.

"You sneak!" he said.

"That's what *you* say—I'm a sneak because I thought of it first. You didn't expect to see me get your gun, did you? You thought you were going to knife me while I wasn't looking. I've got you now, though. I've got you!" His voice welled into a fury. "Say your prayers, if you're interested which way you go!"

Brent stood up stiffly, his face hard and immobile.

"You sneak!" he said again.

"A sneak, am I?" Blanchard ground his teeth and then gave way to a burst of rage. "A sneak! I was a good enough man to get your brother, and I'm a good enough man to get you!"

Out at last! Brent spoke with an earnestness that was echoed in the drawn lines of his face.

"Don't do it, Blanchard. Fight fair!"

Blanchard's voice broke with rage.

"Your brother called me a sneak, and I got him, and now here's yours, you fool!"

The gun was aimed full at Brent's body, but the explosion did not even stagger him. With a snarl Blanchard raised the weapon for a second shot.

"No use," Brent told him calmly. "The shell in the other barrel is a blank, too. You've done just what I expected—proved yourself a sneak and a murderer." He reached suddenly toward his hip-pocket. "No, don't come any closer!"

He laughed contemptuously as the bluff worked. As he had foreseen, the sneak was a coward.

"I'd like to kill you, Blanchard," he continued in the same passionless voice, "but my conscience won't let me. The little test we've just carried out was to find out what you were—not to exact blood for blood. I've found out. From your own mouth has come the avowal of your guilt." He paused, feeling suddenly the unfitness of his oratorical phrasing. "I'm going now in the canoe. In three days the guide will take you off, and after that"—he passed a cold hand over his forehead—"after that I don't know what I shall do about you."

Blanchard, who had been walking toward the shack while the other talked, disappeared within the doorway, and Brent turned once more down the eastern slope. In the middle of the clearing some instinct prompted him to look back.

For the second time Blanchard was covering him with the gun.

"You bungler!"

The lawyer stopped, racking his brains for the clue that might explain the sudden change in Blanchard. The man was ravingly exultant.

"Yes, bungler, that's what I said! You double-crossed yourself that time, all right. You're a smart shyster, but you slipped up when you tried to beat me by a trick!"

The lawyer stood silent, not without a crawling chill of dread, hoping by his very silence to exasperate the murderer into speech.

The ruse worked. With a sudden burst of words Blanchard exultantly spat out his secret.

"You thought you'd hidden the loaded shells, eh? You didn't know I'd have brains enough to look in the locker."

In a flash came memory—the recollection of an untouched box, long forgotten, that a dealer had sent by mistake. The danger was real enough now. The round muzzles of the barrels were searching eyes. When they found him—

"Blanchard!" he shouted.

But the cry came too late. The roar was that of a cannon, the smash of a high explosive that rent the barrel as if it were paper. Blanchard, his hands still gripping the shattered stock of the burst shotgun, hinged and doubled into a lifeless heap.

For ten seconds Brent stood there motionless, a thread of blood veining his face where an errant shot had clipped his cheek-bone. No surge of anger or pity stirred him. The tempestuous tide of the last few minutes had left him cold. Slowly, philosophically, he considered the matter.

In a way wholly unforeseen Blanchard had wrought his own undoing. He might have guessed that the box in the locker were better left untouched; that a thin-barreled gun, designed for the use of black-powder shells only, would not withstand the strain of smokeless.

Grim and unsmiling, Brent squared his shoulders and started up the trail to the shack. The flesh that had been the sneak lay crumpled and inert, already on its way to the Nirvana of honest dust.

#### THANKSGIVING EVE

THE wheat and corn are garnered in  
To overflowing barn and bin;  
The squirrel in the oak has stored  
With thrifty care his winter hoard;  
The last red apple, round and sound,  
Dropped overnight upon the ground;  
The last green leaf has blown away  
And left the woodlands silver-gray:  
To-morrow is Thanksgiving!

Like gold among the withered vines  
A mammoth yellow pumpkin shines;  
'Tis Cinderella's coach that flies  
To us with fairy gifts of pies.  
Behold the crescent moon appear;  
For lo, the busy harvest year  
Hangs up his slender sickle bright,  
Since all his work is done to-night:  
To-morrow is Thanksgiving!

*Minna Irving*



# MEDICAL MARVELS IN OUR ARMY

by James Hay  
Chairman of the Committee on  
Military Affairs, House of Representatives



EVERY soldier wounded in the present world-war is cared for better than he possibly could have been if Colonel Louis A. La Garde, of the United States army, had not conducted an exhaustive series of experiments which enabled him to publish, in 1914, his treatise demonstrating that the heat of ignition in the explosion that discharges a bullet does not destroy the micro-organisms on the bullet.

Thanks to the genius of William C. Gorgas, the present surgeon-general of our army, the miners of the Witwatersrand, the great gold-producing region of South Africa, no longer suffer the terrific mortality from pneumonia which for years struck them down.

Major John Van R. Hoff, of the United States army, freed Porto Rico from small-pox in less than nine months, after vaccinating in three working months no less than eight hundred thousand persons.

Captain Edward B. Vedder, of the United States army, investigated beriberi, a tropical form of neuritis prevalent in the Philippines, discovered how to eliminate the disease from among the Filipino troops and scouts, and gave the native population the secret of coping with the disease.

Major Walter Reed, of the United States army, learned more about typhoid

fever at the close of the Spanish-American War than had ever been known about it before. As a sequel to that, Major Frederick F. Russell, during the mobilization of our troops on the Mexican border in 1912, began the gigantic experiment of inoculating the entire army against typhoid—with the result that in 1912 there were in the whole army only nine cases of the disease, only one of which resulted in death.

Major Reed also made a study of yellow fever which was the basis of General Gorgas's wonderful campaigns against that dreaded scourge of the tropics at Havana and Panama.

I have enumerated these isolated instances of great achievements by the army medical corps of the United States to show that what these officers have done has resulted in benefits that reach round the world. Their work has saved millions of dollars in many business enterprises, and has revolutionized in several branches the art of caring for men in the field and in the hospitals.

The story of medicine and surgery in our army reads like a romance. It is all the more a romance because these achievements were the work of men inspired solely by that stern sense of duty which prevails in the army, without the hope of personal reward or financial gain.

The immense benefits that have thus come to soldiers everywhere, and to humanity in general, have been entirely the fruit of labors of love.

#### A PIONEER PHYSIOLOGIST

One of the most dramatic chapters of the romance is nearly a hundred years old. In 1822, William Beaumont, a surgeon in the United States army, stationed at Fort Mackinac, Michigan, came across a young French Canadian, Alexis St. Martin, who had sustained a severe gunshot wound of the chest and abdomen. St. Martin had been declared a common pauper by the civil authorities of the county.

It must be remembered that at that date, in an isolated spot such as Fort Mackinac then was, medical resources were far behind what they are to-day. Beaumont took the young man into his own house and dressed his wound daily for nearly two years. At the end of the first ten months the wound was partly healed, but it had left a gastric fistula, or permanent opening in the wall of the stomach.

As Beaumont worked over the case, it occurred to him that here was an excellent opportunity for acquiring knowledge about the physiology of digestion and the operation of the gastric juices. In May, 1825, he began his experiments—a long series of patient and detailed researches covering eight years. All this time the army surgeon was supporting St. Martin, and providing him with every possible comfort.

The patient was not entirely grateful, and frequently deserted his benefactor; but Beaumont, either personally or through other men, always tracked him down and brought him back to Fort Mackinac. On one occasion St. Martin succeeded in putting nearly two thousand miles between himself and the fort. Each time that he was brought back the expenses of the trip were paid out of Beaumont's private means.

The surgeon's reward for his eight

years of work and study came in 1833, when Beaumont published his "Experiments and Observations on the Gastric Juice and the Physiology of Digestion," which soon became recognized as one of the great classics of physiology. He was the first man in the profession to describe the movements of the stomach, the secretion of its juices, and the phenomena of gastric inflammation as seen by the naked eye. In his observation of the French Canadian, he had made careful studies of the effect of the gastric juice upon different foods; and his observations along this line were the foundation of modern dietetic scales.

Sir William Osler has said of this army surgeon:

Beaumont was the pioneer physiologist of this country, the first to make an important and enduring contribution to the science. His work remains a model of patient, persevering investigation, experiment, and research.

It is difficult to estimate the debt that civilization owes to the energy and faith and genius of a lonely military surgeon in an isolated army post.

#### GORGAS AND HIS WORK AT PANAMA

In the minds of most Americans there is a more or less vague idea of the tremendous work that General William C. Gorgas did in "cleaning up Panama"; but I cannot refrain, in an article dealing with the medical marvels of our army, from pointing out just how great was the task he accomplished.

When the French company was at work upon the canal it was a byword that every tie laid in the necessary railway construction cost a life. From 1881 to 1889 more than twenty-two thousand laborers perished. In other words, almost one-quarter of the working force died off each year. One station on the old Panama Railroad was called *Matachin*—which means "dead Chinaman"—because one thousand imported Chinese housed at this point died off in six months. The same fate overtook a thou-

sand negroes imported from the west coast of Africa.

When the United States government took charge of Panama, in 1904, the death-rate was forty per thousand.

From July, 1904, to December, 1905, there was a serious epidemic of yellow fever; but in less than two years Gorgas had eradicated the disease entirely, and there has not been a single case there since May, 1906. Some idea of the medical and sanitary work done by this man can be conveyed by the fact that the cost of it has been less than one per cent of the total money appropriated for all purposes in building the canal.

Shortly before the completion of the great waterway, Gorgas said of his own work:

When the canal shall have been finished, it can be shown that sanitation cost about three hundred and sixty-five thousand dollars a year. For a population of one hundred and fifty thousand this means an expenditure of less than one cent per capita per day, and this sum is well within the means of any tropical country.

I do not believe that posterity will consider the commercial and physical success of the canal the greatest good it has conferred upon mankind. I hope that as time passes our descendants will see that the greatest good its construction has brought was the opportunity it gave for demonstrating that the white man could live and work in the tropics and maintain his health at as high a point as he can, doing the same work, in a temperate zone. That this has been demonstrated, none can justly gainsay.

In December, 1913, at the invitation of the Chamber of Mines of Johannesburg, Gorgas went to South Africa and made a scientific inspection and investigation of the cause of the high death-rate from pneumonia among the native laborers employed in the gold mines of the Rand. It was partly in recognition of his work for the South African miners that he received an honorary degree at Oxford, where the public orator of the university, in conferring the distinction, said:

Suffice it to say that it is he who cleansed Havana; it is he who put fever and pestilence to flight on the Isthmus of Panama, and made

possible the long-thwarted construction of the great interoceanic waterway; it is he who has recently improved the sanitary conditions of the South African mines.

The work of Gorgas is so valuable because it covers such a tremendous amount of territory and affects so many millions of people. His Panama methods are being put into use to-day in Trinidad, British Guiana, and many other tropical regions inhabited by the white races.

#### COLONEL LA GARDE'S DISCOVERY

Colonel Louis A. La Garde, as I have already said, is the benefactor of every soldier wounded in the European war, for it was he who revolutionized the treatment of gunshot wounds. Up to the time of his first publication on the subject, the theory had prevailed that the heat generated in firing a projectile was sufficient to disinfect it, and that bullets and grains of powder were made sterile after leaving the gun. By means of extensive experiments conducted in the laboratories of Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, he demonstrated that the earlier ideas on the subject were erroneous, and that both powder and projectile, when primarily infected by virile organisms like the bacilli of tetanus or anthrax, carried the germs in their flight.

Such a thing as a sterile gunshot wound is no longer believed in, and this is the reason why in all army hospitals nowadays the greatest care is taken to rid such wounds of septic matter introduced by the act of firing.

George M. Sternberg, formerly surgeon-general of our army, was the first man to isolate the bacillus of crupous pneumonia. As adviser of the New York Board of Health, he is credited with having been mainly responsible for keeping cholera out of the United States during the epidemic of 1892.

#### OUR ARMY DOCTORS IN PORTO RICO

I have already briefly mentioned Major Hoff's work in Porto Rico. When our government took control of the island, as

a result of the war with Spain, it was found that smallpox was endemic there, as it has commonly been in Spanish-American countries. It was said that the Porto Ricans thought little more of smallpox than of an attack of prickly heat. In December, 1898, however, the spread of the disease assumed such proportions that a disastrous epidemic was threatened.

In January, 1899, the reports of post surgeons for November and December showed that three thousand cases had been noted in the two months. Immediately Governor-General Davis ordered the entire population of the island, including infants, to be vaccinated. This heavy task was accomplished under the direction of Major Hoff, chief surgeon of the division.

As the experience of six months had shown that virus from the United States lost its efficacy on reaching Porto Rico, a vaccine farm was established at Coamo Springs. After that, in spite of the difference in language and customs of the people, the constantly recurring rains that made roads impassable, the lack of hotels, and other inconveniences in the country villages, no less than eight hundred thousand people were vaccinated in three working months.

By October, 1899, there was not a single case of smallpox known to either the military or the civil authorities of Porto Rico. The total cost of ridding the country of the disease was only thirty-two thousand dollars, or about four cents for each person vaccinated.

Furthermore, leprosy was practically stamped out in Porto Rico by segregating the patients in a leper colony. In 1900, Captain Bailey K. Ashford discovered the presence of hookworm on the island, and shortly afterward the same disease was found to be prevalent among the rural population of our Southern States by Dr. Charles W. Stiles, of the Public Health Service. Captain Ashford thereupon devoted himself to the task of eradicating hookworm infection in Porto Rico,

and after treating several hundred thousand patients, he succeeded in reducing the mortality from this disease by no less than ninety per cent.

#### THE CONQUEST OF BERIBERI

Captain Vedder's work in the Philippines is also worthy of fuller record than I have given it. It was he and his associates who determined that the beriberi which is so prevalent in the Far East is what is termed a "deficiency disease"—that is, one caused by a diet deficient in certain substances necessary to the physiological economy of the body. This was proved by a careful investigation of the pathology of the disease in fowls as well as in man.

It was found that beriberi could be eradicated in the Filipino regiments by a simple change of ration, substituting under-milled for polished rice, and that the administration of an alcoholic extract of rice-polishings would alleviate some symptoms of the disease. It was recommended that under-milled rice should be substituted for the polished variety as a food staple for the poorer classes wherever possible. All these results have been admirably summed up in Captain Vedder's treatise on beriberi, which is the latest and most exhaustive work on the subject.

More pioneering in medicine was done by Dr. Ernest R. Gentry and Dr. Thomas L. Ferenbaugh, who discovered, in 1911, that Malta or Mediterranean fever was endemic in southwestern Texas, in connection with the goat-ranches there. These two physicians demonstrated that goats were the agents of transmission for this peculiar disease.

Now comes the story of the heroism of Major Walter Reed and his associates in Cuba.

In accordance with the liberal policies of General Sternberg's administration, Major Reed was sent to pursue advanced studies in pathology and bacteriology under Professor Welch at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. In Welch's laboratory he



made an important investigation of the lymphoid nodules of the liver in typhoid fever.

In 1900, Reed was detailed as the head of a board consisting of James Carroll, Aristide Agramonte, and Jesse W. Lazear, to study yellow fever in Cuba.

#### THE WAR AGAINST YELLOW FEVER

At this time it was commonly supposed that the disease was caused by a special micro-organism, the *bacillus icteroides* of Sanarelli. Reed subjected this theory of causation to severe tests, and soon disproved it. It had been assumed by J. C. Nott, in 1848, and by Carlos Finlay, in 1881-1886, that mosquitoes are agents in the transmission of yellow fever, and this theory had already been proved true in the case of malarial fever by the experimental demonstrations of Ross and others.

Reed now proceeded to put this theory to the test. With his associates, he was able to demonstrate in the most rigorous manner that yellow fever is transmitted by a special variety of mosquito, the *Stegomyia fasciata*, and not, as had hitherto been supposed, by contagion from clothing and bedding or through infection by water, sewage, or other substances accidentally taken into the mouth.

To prove this, a number of non-immune persons voluntarily subjected themselves to the bites of mosquitoes which had previously bitten known yellow-fever patients, or to injections of blood or filtered blood serum from such patients. Twenty-two cases of experimental yellow fever were thus produced; while seven enlisted men boldly slept in infected bedding without acquiring the disease.

Dr. Carroll was the first to submit to mosquito inoculation, and sustained an attack of yellow fever, from which he recovered. Dr. Lazear, who had been accidentally bitten by a yellow-fever mosquito, died from the disease.

Reed's results were soon confirmed by other observers in Mexico, South America,

and elsewhere, and the knowledge that yellow fever is transmitted by a special variety of mosquito gave the sanitarian the proper means for preventing its occurrence. Of this discovery Professor Welch said:

I am in a position to know that the credit for the original ideas embodied in this work belongs wholly to Major Reed.

Reed's theories were used by Gorgas in eradicating yellow fever at Havana, when he became chief sanitary officer of the Cuban capital in February, 1901. In three months, by the simple process of screening yellow-fever patients and habitations, and destroying the mosquitoes themselves, the city was freed from the disease for the first time in its history.

#### OTHER HEROES OF THE CORPS

Going further back in the annals of the medical corps, there is found the name of William Alexander Hammond, surgeon-general of the United States army from 1862 to 1864. Unfortunately, in consequence of difficulties with Secretary Stanton, he was dismissed from the army, after which he went to New York. There he became a noted authority on nervous diseases and insanity. He was the first to describe the neurotic condition known as "athetosis." He was editor of the *New York Medical Journal* and other periodicals dealing with his professional studies.

Medical officers of the United States army have been particularly efficient and heroic during great catastrophes in time of peace. At the time of the great earthquake and fire in San Francisco, General Torney—then Colonel Torney—was the commanding officer of the general hospital at the Presidio, and upon him devolved the management of medical relief and sanitation in connection with the disaster. General Funston issued an order placing the sanitary affairs of the smitten city under Torney. When every other hospital was in danger of destruction, and patients had to be carried from them

as fast as possible, Torney was receiving them at the Presidio without hitch or difficulty, although they were being brought in by a ceaseless stream of automobiles, carriages, wagons, and ambulances.

#### THE PERSONNEL OF THE CORPS

The medical force of the United States army now consists of six hundred and nineteen officers of the regular Medical Corps, and one hundred and one officers of the Medical Reserve Corps. In addition to this is the corps of trained nurses. General hospitals, where medical and surgical work of the highest order is done every day, are maintained at all army posts and at some other points.

For the support of the entire medical department, the people of the United States pay annually about three million dollars in salaries and the cost of equipment. As I have attempted to show, for this very moderate amount most valuable service is rendered—service that not only

cares for the health of officers and men in this country, in the icy regions of Alaska, and in the tropical jungles of the Philippines, but also gives to the public and to the world at large medical and surgical knowledge of inestimable benefit.

The contrast between the situation to-day and that in 1776 is marked. In that year Congress ordered that each five thousand enlisted men should be provided with one surgeon and five assistants, the surgeon to be paid one dollar and sixty-six cents a day, and each assistant one dollar a day.

In the evolution of the corps from 1776 until the present time, there has come such an efficiency that to-day the work of our army surgeons influences the commerce, colonization, and general health of practically every nation in the world.

It is not too much to say that in the United States army are to be found some of the most famous medical names of the present time.

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#### AUTUMN LEAVES

THE life of a leaf  
Is sealed with the year;  
Yet autumn it welcomes  
With never a fear.

It roams with the breeze  
Regardless of care,  
Clothed like a flame  
And light as the air.

Enjoying the sun,  
It dances along  
To join with the wind  
In the lilt of a song.

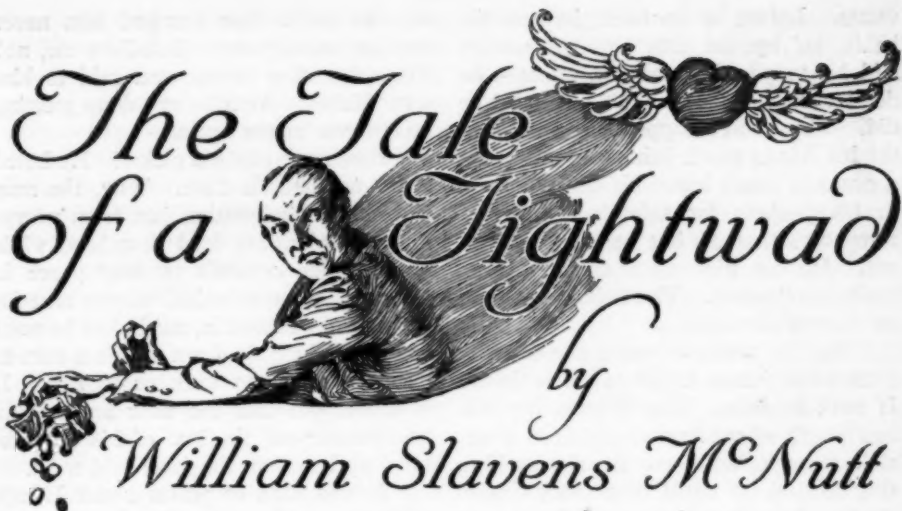
'Tis a vagabond life  
That pulses and thrills,  
To flutter and leap  
Whene'er the wind wills!

No regret for the days  
Of summer or spring,  
No thought of the snows  
That winter will bring;

Only rejoicing  
That autumn is here.  
The life of a leaf  
Is sealed with the year!

*Elizabeth D. Preston*

# The Tale of a Tightwad



by  
William Slavens McNutt

"I LIKE dollars same as I like race-horses," the saleslady behind the hotel cigar-counter explained. "I like 'em when they're movin', an' furnishin' some excitement to the onlookers. A race-horse packed in a can don't make anybody's heart beat faster, does it? No! Well, a dollar buried for life in a bank is my idea of nothing useful.

"It's all right to put a race-horse in his stall now an' then, to let him get his growth, or recover his wind for the next heat. But they only bed a race-horse down in a nice pile of well-combed straw so that he can show more speed when they take him out again. It's perfectly all right to bed a dollar down in the bank once in a while, to let it grow a few cents an' get its breath back; but, man, don't forget where you put the poor thing.

"A dollar is one of the best little friends I know of, if you just give it a chance; but you can't hide it away in the dark forever, like as if you was ashamed to be seen with it, an' then expect it to sit up on its hind legs an' make you laugh when you feel blue, can you? What? No! Take it out an' pal around with it now an' then. Give it the air. Let it run for you before it's too late. A

horse won't go for you after it's dead, an' a dollar won't go for you after you're dead.

"Buh-lieve me, no! You may be able to come back an' haunt your wife if she marries somebody you never did like; but after they pull off the parade that you only go one way with, you can't startle a dollar! You can mail it a low moan of anguish in your astral envelope, but you can't make it hop over the counter and come back disguised as six bits and a good cigar. Not after the undertaker's cashed in his percentage on you, you can't! A dollar ain't superstitious. It don't believe in spooks.

"If a dollar's your best friend, don't give it life imprisonment without a fair trial. Money talks; listen to what it says, an' do it justice. Don't ever get the habit.

"What habit? Why, the economy habit. It's deadly. It's worse than drugs, or whisky, or even purple socks. A cocain fiend may be cured till he's so sick of the drug that he has to take to his bed when the snow falls, but a habitual tightwad will never come loose.

"It's an awful habit. It sneaks up on a man so! Some good guy with a flap to his pocket that opens both ways starts in economizin' to buy somethin' he

wants. Before he knows it, he gets the habit, an' by the time he's got enough laid by to pay for what he wants—he don't want it. He couldn't buy it, if he did. The habit's sapped his will-power till his hands won't behave any better'n a drunken man's legs. He can put them in his pockets for safety's sake when company's present, but he can't get 'em out. He can pick up a dollar, but he can't lay it down. The habit's got him, an' he can't break it.

"Oh, it's awful to watch one o' these economical knots tryin' to untie itself! It can't be done. They'll get a few dollars' worth of snarl untangled after a terrible struggle, an' then, all of a sudden, they'll wind up again in a fancy design so close-knit that if two-bit pieces were the size of a flea's eye, the Indian penny couldn't get his nose through the cracks to breathe. Economy's an acquired habit with most of us—like olives an' grand opera; but once you get it—curtain! You'll never be able to spend any money for fun, 'cause it's no fun for an economy victim to spend money. An' it's a habit you'll never break away from. You may stray, but you'll always go back to it.

"Did you know Henry Wiggins, that used to live here in the hotel? No? He was a long, lean, solemn squizzle from somewhere in New England. He always looked as if he'd just read a telegram that was as bad as he thought it was before he opened it.

"He had a lot of money, but he didn't feel good about it. He never thought about how much he had; all he could think about was how much there was in the world that he didn't have. If he'd ever managed to get it all, he'd have felt still worse because there wasn't any more to get. He invested out here in real estate and timber. He was the same to a dollar as a curly-haired leadin' man to a matinée girl. He couldn't get away from it if he tried—an' he never tried!

"He had a good character, 'cause a bad one was expensive. His lips never touched liquor, 'cause liquor costs money,

an' the dollar that touched him never touched nobody else! Buh-lieve me, no! The only thing money ever said to him was 'Hello!' After he got done greeting it, it never spoke again.

"How he did hate a nickel! He hated it for not bein' a dime. Why, the man had chronic indigestion just from worryin' over what his food cost him, while he ate. He couldn't get any peace in his sleep, because he had to pay rent for the room he snored in, an' before he went anywheres he'd sit down an' do a sum to decide whether to walk or to ride. If he found out that the wear an' tear on shoe-leather an' the loss of his time totaled up less than the fare, he'd walk.

"It was kind o' pitiful about Henry, at that. He honestly thought that each time he black-jacked a dollar an' laid it away on the ice, he'd had a real good time; but he hadn't. He didn't get any real fun out of it. He thought he did, but he had a nagging suspicion all the time that in some way he was short-changing himself; an' it preyed on his mind. He thought he'd found a way to beat the grand average of human happiness without contributin' to it; an' yet away down deep inside of himself he knew he hadn't.

"He knew he was wrong, so he spent most of his spare time tellin' people how right he was. Ain't that always the way? If a guy's right, he don't bother spreadin' the news; but if he's wrong, he'll pay space rates for a chance to say that he ain't. A guilty conscience is a regular phonograph with a perpetual-motion attachment, an' a good title for the one tune it plays would be: 'I Ain't What I Know I Am.' Ain't it so?

## II

"It was that way with Henry Wiggins. He couldn't talk to you for five minutes without startin' in to tell you what a good time he had bein' unhappy. He used to lean on the counter there an' tell me over an' over again that his vice was virtue. Why, if you drove him to



it, he'd argue that the orphans an' widows of the country would all go to the poorhouse if he were to loosen up an' spend anything. He wasn't savin' up to give to anybody that needed it, but he'd swear that poor people were better off because he was what he called 'frugal,' and that they would be poorer if they got any part of what he had more of than he needed. He knew lots of words, but he couldn't fit 'em together in any kind of an argument that sounded reasonable.

"I agreed with him just as long as his stuff sounded funny to me, but after a while it got stale, an' I told him something.

"Do you know what?" I says to him one day. 'You ain't deep; you're just tight. You're just a plain, ordinary, every-day tightwad. There's only one reason you hang on to money the way you do,' I says to him. 'You'd rather hang on than let go. Don't kid yourself into thinkin' that you shine your own shoes just to give the poor little dago bootblack time to study English an' learn to be President or something. You black 'em yourself because you'd rather bend over an' work than set still an' pay a nickel for the privilege. You ain't denyin' yourself nothin',' I says, 'just to set some widows or orphans a good example. You're not stingy,' I says, 'because you think you ought to be stingy. You're stingy,' I says to him, 'just because you're stingy. You'd have a lot more fun if you were generous, an' you know it; but you're so stingy you won't even give yourself a good time. You think you're pretty wise for holding out on everybody,' I says to him. 'Wise!' I says. 'Why, you're the champion book of the universe! A hick that lets a con man oil him for a piece o' change may be a foolish fish,' I says; 'but if he's a sucker, you're a whole school of whales. You double-cross yourself. You sell yourself a gold brick, an' when you find out it's brass you won't believe it. No! You go an' buy more o' the same. You've

been stingy an' miserable all your life,' I says to him. 'The answer's easy. Two an' two make four. Loosen up an' be happy!'

"Do you think he got sore? Not a chance! Just confidential.

"In a way you're right,' he admits. 'But at the same time you're absolutely wrong. I am miserable,' he says. 'I never have had any fun, and sometimes I do feel as if I was cheating myself; but I'm not,' he says. 'I only feel that way in my moments of weakness. I have a system,' he says; 'a system that may take time to work out to my advantage, but it will work,' he says. 'We're all out for the most we can get out of life, aren't we? Sure. Now some people spend money as they get it, for this, that, and the other thing. They spend it to go to theaters and dances. They spend it for nice clothes. They spend it for fine apartments and expensive food. They spend it in tips in return for good service and a smile from the people that serve them. They spend it for many little things each day—many things which I know they don't particularly want.

"That's where I'm different,' Henry goes on to tell me. 'I'm not stingy; I'm just playing my system. I'm not going to spend a nickel that I don't absolutely have to until I see something that I like better than I like money—something that I want more than I want anything else in the world. When I find that thing, I'll have the money to get it, and I will get it. No matter what it costs, I'll get it! When I find the one thing that will bring me happiness, you'll see whether I'm stingy or not! You'll see whether I can spend money or not. Most people haven't the strength of character to wait for big happiness. They must have it every day in retail lots. I'm different. I'm going to wait until I find what I've absolutely got to have to make me happy, and when I find it I'll be able to get it. You bet I will! That's my system,' he says. 'I'm no fool!'

" 'Then you're a fine imitation,' I says. 'Accordin' to all I've been able to dope out, the Lord figured out this game of life pretty well. He made happiness the reward for winnin' at it, an' laid out a system of play that don't jibe with the one you follow. Accordin' to His system, a tip an' a kind word to the bootblack in the mornin' entitles you to a chip o' happiness out of the main pot. The more you feed the kitty that goes to them that ain't got the price to buy in on the big game, the more luck you have with the hands you hold. You've got into the habit of cheatin' yourself, Mr. Wiggins,' I says. 'An' when you want to hand yourself a square deal, you won't be able to break the habit,' I says.

" 'Ah, won't I?' he says. 'You'll see!'

" 'An' I saw!'

### III

" WIGGINS was standin' right here by the counter, talkin' to me, when he first laid eyes on Lily Martin. As he watched her walk across the lobby to the elevator his eyes bulged out till they looked like a couple of blue glass marbles that was just about to fall an' break.

" 'What a lovely girl!' he says. 'I wish I could meet her.'

" 'I laugh.

" 'Lay off!' I says to him. 'Lily Martin an' her mother haven't got any too much money of their own,' I says; 'but there's a whole flock of money goats blatting with sorrow because Lily won't take all they've got—an' them, too! Men,' I says to him, 'fight for the chance to spend regular money on her, an' only the lucky ones get it. You,' I says, 'don't spend enough on clothes in a year to buy her flowers for a week. She ain't accustomed to tightwads,' I says to him.

" 'But I want to meet her,' he says. 'I want to!'

" 'I seen he meant it, an' it struck me funny. I could see him spendin' the evenin' with Lily Martin, an' askin' her to take a walk around the block or have a stick of gum; so I told him I'd fix it

for him, an' then I got in touch with Bert Edgeley.

" Bert was a fine scout. Money was the only desirable thing he didn't have. He was a young mining-engineer, an' he was doin' fine, both with his profession and with Lily Martin. He was all there with her that spring. Her mother was a little sour on him because he didn't have a check-book like some, but what he lacked with the mother he made up with Lily, buh-lieve me! So I got hold of Bert an' gave him the straight dope about Wiggins.

" 'He's got a crush on Miss Martin,' I tell him. 'If he gets a chance to meet her, he'll probably buy a new fifty-cent tie to make an impression. After he's kicked in with the price of an ice-cream soda, he'll think he's got some kind of a claim on her, an' say things fit to laugh at,' I says. 'Put Miss Martin wise first,' I says, 'an' then make this human astringent known to her. There's some comedy in it,' I says to Bert.

" 'An' he fell for it. I introduce him to Wiggins, an' Bert promises to take him to call on Miss Martin that night. It was a laugh from the start. Wiggins was as excited as if somebody was goin' to pay him a dollar he hadn't expected to get. While he was still talkin' to me about how glad he was to get the chance to meet her, she come out of the elevator an' crossed the lobby to the desk. Wiggins squared off an' took a good, keen, Yankee squint. When she'd gone out, he turned to me, an' he says:

" 'That's the prettiest girl I ever saw in my life,' he says. 'I want her!' he says. 'I want her more than I ever yet wanted anything, and I know,' he says, 'that once I get acquainted with her, I'll want her a darn sight more than I do now. You think I'm a tightwad,' he says. 'Now I'll show you that I'm not. I've seen what I want,' he says, 'and I've got the money to help me get it. You'll see!'

" 'I'll say one thing for the simp—he didn't waste no time. I'd never seen

him with a suit of clothes on that cost him more than ten dollars. That night he showed up to meet Bert all togged out in evening clothes and a top-hat; an' he had a bunch of violets an' a box of candy for Miss Martin. It was a real box of candy, mind you, not a scoopful out of a bucket. Honest! For the first time in his life, he'd gone an' spent good money on himself just to get ready to meet her.

"An' you know what? He wasn't bad-lookin' when he was dressed decent. No, he wasn't. I'd come to think of him as a kind of a slob, seein' him togged out cheap, as I always had; but with regular clothes on he was kind of handsome in a lean, hungry, serious sort of way. He looked real striking.

"Well, he met Lily Martin according to schedule, but what come after the meeting come different than anything I'd planned. Say, man! The dead one come to life—honest he did. An' such a life! Dinners an' dances an' parties an' theaters an' flowers! All for Miss Martin, all paid for by Tightwad Wiggins that had never so much as paid for havin' his shoes shined up to then.

"An' he made people think he liked to part with his dough. That was the weird part of it. He ponied up with a smile; an' if the smile was forced, it didn't show to the naked eye. He put up a campaign of entertainment that made Lily Martin an' her mother dizzy with the speed of it. He paid for it, an' made 'em think it come natural to him. Oh, he was an actor! I got to give him credit.

"Bert Edgeley had gone an' primed Miss Martin for a funny hick that would give then all a good laugh if she would agree to take a few minutes off an' meet him; an' instead o' that, Wiggins give her the time of her young life. How was she to know that Henry had switched the cut on Bert? It seemed to her that Edgeley had gone an' slandered a lovely gentleman. He only made it all the worse by tryin' to explain to her that Wiggins was really funny; that the money he was

spendin' on her was the biggest joke of all, an' all that. No chance! She was off Bert, who was no gentleman to speak ill of such a splendid fellow as Henry Wiggins, an' Henry had the inside track.

"'You're a fine tipster!' Bert says to me. 'I thought you told me this Wiggins was a kind of something that ought to be in vaudeville! Didn't you say he spent his time alone because he was too stingy to share with a friend? What? He's in and I'm out. I've tried to laugh, but there's nothing funny about it. It's getting serious!'

"'It won't last,' I tell him.

"'No,' he says. 'Life won't last—not forever. That's no helpful hint. You touted me into this; can't you tout me out?'

"'Don't worry,' I says. 'The man's a habitual tightwad. He's playin' a part, an' playin' it fine,' I says, 'but he'll make a mistake. He smiles while he's spendin' all this dough,' I says; 'but the smile hurts, buh-lieve me! He'll forget an' groan some o' these days, an' she'll get a chance to see him as he is. Don't worry!'

#### IV

"But Bert did worry, an' so did I. I liked Miss Martin, an' I was gettin' scared for fear this Wiggins was goin' to play the part outright up to the altar an' spend like a prince till the weddin'-bells rung for him. I knew what would happen to Lily Martin if he ever got her that far. She'd never lay eyes on a thin dime from the time she once said 'I do.' Can you imagine what Henry Wiggins would turn into after spendin' what he had spent to get a woman, an' gettin' her? Well, I can!

"Wiggins was on my nerves, too. He was so blamed triumphant! Every time he come over to the stand here to buy a paper he'd tip me a quarter. Him that had never bought papers before! Him that had always sneaked into the lobby an' picked up the news of the day second-hand from some crumpled sheet that a

human being had read and thrown away. He'd buy his own an' tip me a quarter!

" 'You're doin' pretty well,' I says to him one day, real snappy. 'But don't bother to hand me any more quarters,' I says. 'I don't want blood-money,' I says. 'You act as if you liked it, an' you act pretty well; but I know you bleed internally from the rupture every time you jar yourself loose from one of these two-bit pieces.'

" 'You remember what I told you?' he says, still smilin'. 'I was never stingy. I was simply saving my money to buy happiness with when I saw what I knew would make me happy. I've seen it, and I don't think any one can accuse me now of being a tightwad.'

" 'No,' I says, 'not now; but I know that the punishment you're undergoin' is somethin' frightful. You're doin' well, but you can't stand the pain forever.'

" 'I'm having the time of my life,' he says, with a smile still workin'. 'This is what I've had the strength to wait for.'

" 'Oh, Wiggins was game! He had the money, an' he sure spent it like a drunken sailor. Miss Martin said something about liking to take a little trip among the islands in the Sound, and Wiggins just carelessly steps out and buys the White Wave, a forty-five-foot yacht, to take her where she wanted to go. Can you beat it? He could have rented something, but he buys it! That little boat was second-hand, but it stood him in a good five hundred dollars in real money—an' just because she said she would like the trip! It had me beat.'

" 'They made up a party for the voyage, an' got the boss here to let me off to go along as a kind of general ladies' maid an' stewardess. Bert Edgeley was along, an' five others besides Wiggins an' the Martins. Bert was just as happy as a Mexican hairless dog at the north pole. He was playin' Wiggins's cards for him right along, the poor simp! Bert knew what Wiggins really was. Miss Martin had never seen him in his natural state, so poor Bert's grouch goes with her for

unmanly jealousy of a generous and gentlemanly rival—an' he acts accordingly.

" 'I tried to give her the low-down on this fellow Wiggins,' he says to me. 'I suppose it doesn't seem right to knock him when I'm his guest, but great Scott, you an' I know that he's not human! I just can't sit by and see Lily fooled by a thing like him; but when I try to tell her what he is, she thinks I'm jealous of him. An' I am,' he says. 'He's carried his bluff so far, I'm worried white!'

" 'He'll crack,' I says, an' tried to think I meant it; but I couldn't. Henry Wiggins had my goat.

## V

" 'It was fine sailin' down the Sound the first day out, but about noon of the second we run into a bank of fog you couldn't see ten feet through. They shut her down to half speed, an' went nosin' through it, blowin' the fog-whistle an' tryin' to keep a general guess on where we were headin' for. There'd been quite a breeze in the mornin', an' there was a nasty little chop left. We went wallowing through it for about half an hour, an' then, all of a sudden, whang, crash, lickety-bang! We hit a rock hard enough to knock out a prize-fighter that's as good as he says he is. The bow of that boat scooted up on a nice little accommodatin' wave that couldn't stay long, an' when the wave moved on, the poor bow fell on that rock. Some fall! It knocked a hole in the boat big enough for a good-sized river to run through without gettin' dammed up. The men got the life-boat busy, an' found we were only a few yards from shore. They got us all off all right, but speed was necessary. That five-hundred-dollar beauty of Wiggins's was spoilin' herself on that rock mighty fast.

" 'Scared as I was, I took pains to watch an' see if he'd squeal. He didn't. When we got ashore, I took pains to mention what a shame it was that the boat should be a total loss to him, so soon after he'd bought it, an' he just laughed.

" 'There are other boats,' he says, in



an offhand way. 'I'm only troubled about this unavoidable inconvenience to the ladies.'

"We'd landed on a little beach at the foot of some high rocks, an' we sat there for a half-hour or so, wonderin' where we was. Then the fog lifted, an' we got a little peek around. We was on one o' them steep little rocky islands that a mountain goat couldn't make a mile an hour across. It was a cinch that wherever we was goin' from where we were, we wouldn't travel afoot. The only way away from there was by water.

"The captain squinted around a little an' located himself. He said we were only about two miles from Uniondale.

"'Well, of all good fortune!' Wiggins chirps up, as happy as a canary sounds. 'Uniondale, eh? Well, we won't have to forego our trip after all. Just before I bought the White Wave a chap from Uniondale approached me and tried to sell me his boat. She was in the harbor at Uniondale, and I didn't want to take the time to run across here and look her over, so I bought the White Wave. I'll just row the two miles up to Uniondale with the captain, buy the boat that's there, and return for you people in a jiffy. I understand it's a better boat than the White Wave was, anyway.'

"Just like that! Five hundred dollars gone on the rocks, an' he was happy 'cause he had the chance to spend another wad right away quick. Of course, everyone tried to argue him out of doing any such thing, but he wouldn't be dissuaded. Not him! An' he was the Henry Wiggins that up to two months before that time wouldn't tip his hat, if he could help it, on account of the wear an' tear on the brim!

"'If it should happen that I'm not able to buy the vessel I have in mind, I'll hire some craft and come back for you at once,' he says. 'I'm sorry on account of the inconvenience you have been put to.'

"So he got into the life-boat with the captain, an' they rowed away for Union-

dale. All the rest of us, except Bert an' me, sat there an' said what a fine an' wonderful man Henry Wiggins was.

## VI

"WELL, we kept right on sitting. Two hours went by, an' still we sat. Another hour passed, an' it began to rain, an' still we sat. Wiggins an' the captain had had time to row to Uniondale an' get a boat built, it seemed to us, an' still we sat. We got soaking wet and shivering cold. Some of the women begun to cry, an' all the men begun to swear. We wondered if Wiggins an' the captain had been drowned, or if they'd only been wrecked again an' were yet alive. We wondered for a while, an' by an' by we got so cold an' wet we didn't care.

"It was pretty near dark when at last a fishin'-boat came along an' we hailed it. The fishermen put off a rowboat an' took us aboard, an' we started for Uniondale. There wasn't any cabin on that fishing-boat, an' we were gettin' colder an' wetter all the time. We'd gone about a mile when we see a couple of men in a boat in near shore.

"'It's Wiggins an' the captain,' Edgeley says, an' the fishermen steered in toward them.

"It was Wiggins an' the captain, all right. They was havin' high words. We could hear the captain speakin' his mind in a way no hired man should speak to the guy that pays him. We run alongside of them an' stopped.

"I never see such anguish as there was on Wiggins's face. He seen us, but he hardly took notice. The captain was different.

"'Don't none of you people blame me,' he says in a loud voice. 'This man Wiggins is crazy. I been tryin' to get him to go on for hours, an' he wouldn't budge. The idea of him lettin' you people set back there in the rain, an' likely get your death of cold! It ain't my fault. He's crazy, I tell you!'

"'But it's right down there between those two little rocks,' Wiggins says. 'It's

easy to get at. I could get it, if I wasn't so short-winded. I can't stay under long enough to feel around for it. Won't you please try, captain? It's right there between those two little rocks, and the water's hardly up to your neck now the tide's gone out so.'

"No, I won't try!' the captain yells at him. 'You're crazy!'

"What's the matter?' Bert Edgeley says.

"I was sitting here counting my change while the captain rowed, and I dropped a five-dollar gold piece overboard,' Wiggins wails, wringin' his hands. 'It's right down there between those two little rocks. I know right where it is. I could get it easy, if I could hold my breath long enough to hunt around for it. Couldn't you just try for it once? I'll show you right where it is!'

"Lily Martin stepped to the rail of the boat an' looked down at Wiggins. Her teeth had been chatterin' with the cold for two or three hours, but she seemed to be warm enough all of a sudden.

"Have you been hunting for that five-dollar gold piece all afternoon?' she asks in a tone of voice that would have made Jesse James throw up his hands on suspicion.

"Wiggins looks at her, an' I'll swear he hardly saw her. His mind was where it belonged—on money.

"It's right down there between those two little rocks,' he says, like a kid re-

citin' a piece. 'It's only about five feet under water, now that the tide's gone out so far.'

"Lily turned her back on him an' held out her hand to Bert Edgeley.

"I beg your pardon, Bert,' she says. 'I didn't understand!'

"One of the boys give the fisherman the high sign, an' he started the engine. Wiggins scarcely paid any attention to our leavin'. He was too busy pleadin' with the captain to dive down an' make a try for the five-dollar gold piece that was just between the two little rocks. The last we seen of the two of 'em, the captain was rowin' after us an' swearin' a blue streak. Wiggins was standin' up, wringin' his hands an' beggin' for the captain to wait an' let him make just one more try for it. The habit had him!

"Wiggins moved from the hotel here to cheaper quarters, as soon as he got back to town, an' I didn't see him for near six months. Then one afternoon I was leanin' over the counter, readin' the account of Lily Martin's marriage to Bert Edgeley, when Henry come shufflin' in. He looked seedier an' sadder than ever.

"I see they're married,' he says to me. 'I'm glad I escaped! I must have been mad, for a time,' he says. 'It was a terrible expense! You wouldn't believe how much I spent!'

"You can't get away from it, I tell you. It ain't done. Economy's a nice pastime, but it's a terrible habit!"

### SHADOWS

A LITTLE trellis stood beside my head,  
And all the tiny fruitage of its vine  
Fashioned a shadowy cover to my bed,  
And I was madly drunk on shadow wine!

A lily bell hung sidewise, leaning down,  
And gowned me in a robe so light and long;  
And so I dreamed, and drank, and slept, and heard  
The lily's song.

Lo, for a house, the shadow of the moon;  
For golden money, all the daisy rings;  
And for my love, the meadow at my side—  
Thus tramps are kings!

*Djuna Barnes*

# THE STAGE

by  
Matthew White, Jr.



PHILIP MERIVALE, PATRICIA COLLINGE, AND EFFIE SHANNON IN A SCENE FROM THE SECOND ACT OF THE GLAD PLAY, "POLLYANNA"

*From a photograph by White, New York*

ARE villains the real heroes, after all? Of the first ten plays presented on Broadway this season, five turned on crime, and two of these were the only unqualified hits in the group. In each of these two cases, moreover, the sympathy of the audience goes out to the criminals. Indeed, in "Turn to the Right," whirlwinds of applause greet the contemplated perpetration of a theft.

Is there then something fascinating about crime itself that seems to make it such safe material for managers to exploit? If one needs consolation in the premises, one may find it in the reflection that the sex problem has meanwhile been taking a much-needed rest.

Another outstanding factor of the early theatrical season in New York is the utter banality of the three English offerings



MARY NASH AND HENRY HULL IN THE SECOND ACT OF THE STRIKING NEW DRAMA,  
"THE MAN WHO CAME BACK"

*From a photograph by White, New York*



that were put forward. Of one of them, "Please Help Emily," I had something to say last month. Another, "A Little Bit of Fluff," lasted only a week. Both it and "Please Help Emily" were big London hits, while the third, "The Happy Ending," by the Macphersons, was

Maeterlinck's "Blue Bird" which shows people after death. But when I tell you that one of the episodes introduced a fresh young boy scout looking at his own tombstone, and making fun of the inscription placed thereon by his father, you may judge how clumsily the Brit-



MARJORIE PATTERSON AS PIERROT IN THE PANTOMIME WITH MUSIC, "PIERROT THE PRODIGAL," AT THE BOOTH THEATER

seen on August 21, for the first time on any stage, at the Shubert, whence it was removed to the limbo of the storehouse just five days later. With it went in tangible form the best feature of the piece—namely, the scenery designed by the young American, Robert Edmond Jones.

The idea of "The Happy Ending" was after—a long way after—that portion of

ish authors treated a theme that fared so happily at the hands of the inspired Belgian.

The whole point of the play seemed aimed at regarding death as the only worth-while thing connected with life. Thus we have a joyful cry set up in the hereafter:

"Here comes a railway accident!"

Forthwith we see the victims skipping



happily on the stage, glad to be released from the burden of mortality. And the stirring first-act climax was achieved—unhappily most of it off stage—by the strains of martial music following the proclamation that an entire regiment had been annihilated.

It cost a lot of money to put the piece on, and a score of no mean caliber was written for it by Eugene Haile. But "the play's the thing"; and "The Happy Ending" was not really a play, but merely a series of episodes, most of them outlandish and not a few in exceedingly bad taste. The same authors wrote "Evidence," a melo-

drama which had its first—and very soon its last—performance on this side two years ago, and last spring they furnished "A King of Nowhere" for Lou Tellegen.

The most striking of the early-season offerings is "The Man Who Came Back," dramatized by Jules Eckert Goodman from a story by John Fleming Wilson. Mr. Brady produced it at the Playhouse on the Saturday night before Labor Day, and the Tuesday morning newspapers carried advertisements stating that tickets could be procured for the Christmas and New Year performances.

The play is such an interesting one that



EVA LE GALLIENNE AND TOM POWERS IN  
"MR. LAZARUS"—THE CENTRAL  
FIGURE IS A LARGER PORTRAIT  
OF MISS LE GALLIENNE

it merits a long run. There is nothing particularly novel about its theme—the story of a multimillionaire's spendthrift son thrown on his own by a long-suffering and at last rebellious father; but with Mr. Goodman's treatment and Mr. Brady's cast, "The Man Who Came Back" does not need novelty. The audience gets

plenty of action, several thrills, and a variety of backgrounds. Also it gets good, gripping drama and a wealth of heart-interest, and in place of watching criminals triumphing over the police, it sees the victims of evil habits struggling up from the depths.

There is real refreshment in the way



HENRY KOLKER AND EMELIE POLINI IN A SCENE FROM  
"THE SILENT WITNESS"

*From a photograph by White, New York*



FRANCES DEMAREST AND HAL FORDE IN THE NEW MUSICAL COMEDY, "THE GIRL FROM BRAZIL"

*From a photograph by White, New York*

Henry Hull plays *Henry Potter*. It's the first big part he has had, and coupled with his youth to look it there is the skill to carry off its emotional passages. Hull was inbred to the stage, as were his two brothers—the elder being Howard, husband of

Margaret Anglin, in whose company Henry has played small rôles, and the other Shelley, the *Cinderella Man*. Their father is William Hull, dramatic editor of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*.

Mary Nash, too, makes good as *Mar-*



*celle*, the cabaret singer, in Frisco, who follows *Potter* to Shanghai, and who later, in Hawaii, does some extraordinary work that brings about the smashing climax. She was with Grace George's repertory company at this same theater last season, and is the elder sister of Florence, who does character work. The girls were born in Albany.

Another recruit from Miss George's company is Ernest Lawford, who brings his keen sense of values to a rôle far beneath his powers. Charlotte Granville, too, makes much of little, and I hereby tender her my apologies for confounding her with Charlotte Greenwood not once, but actually

lines, which are as far apart as the poles.

Another worth-while offering is "Mr. Lazarus," starring Henry E. Dixey, and written by those apparently sure-fire collaborators who turned out "The Dummy," "The Argyle Case," and "Polygamy"—Harvey O'Higgins and Harriet Ford. For the first time in my knowledge a woman is proclaimed as the producer on the house-bills, which read:

"Helen Tyler presents."

KATHLYN WILLIAMS,  
STARRING IN MOROSCO-  
PALLAS PHOTOPLAYS

*From a photograph by  
Carpenter, Los Angeles*



twice — July and September—when I mentioned her connection with "So Long Letty," a musical show that will bring Miss Greenwood to town very shortly. Both women are absolutely distinctive and clever in their respective

Miss Tyler has been shrouding her sex under the veil of the impersonal Modern Play Company, but now she boldly comes into the open, as she need not hesitate to do, for she has succeeded where so many men fail—in picking



MARJORIE RAMBEAU, WHO PLAYS THE LEAD IN "CHEATING CHEATERS," ONE OF THE HITS  
OF THE NEW YORK SEASON

*From her latest photograph by Sarony, New York*

winners from play scripts. Associated with Selwyn & Co. when they were agents, she pinned her faith to "Within the Law" after all the other managers had seen

ducers on their own account and "Within the Law" made them leaders in their new line.

I think it must be Miss Tyler's broad-



MARGERY MAUDE AND GEORGE ARLISS IN A SCENE  
FROM THE FIRST ACT OF THE NEW  
PLAY, "PAGANINI"

*From a photograph by White,  
New York*

nothing in it. And even when one of them had produced it with disastrous results in Chicago, she still stuck to her belief in the drawing-power of the piece, with the result that Selwyn & Co. became pro-

mindedness that keeps her so uniformly successful. She does not permit herself to be hampered by precedents and traditions. I can well imagine a less astute manager balking at casting Dixey as Mr.



*From a photograph by  
Savory, New York*

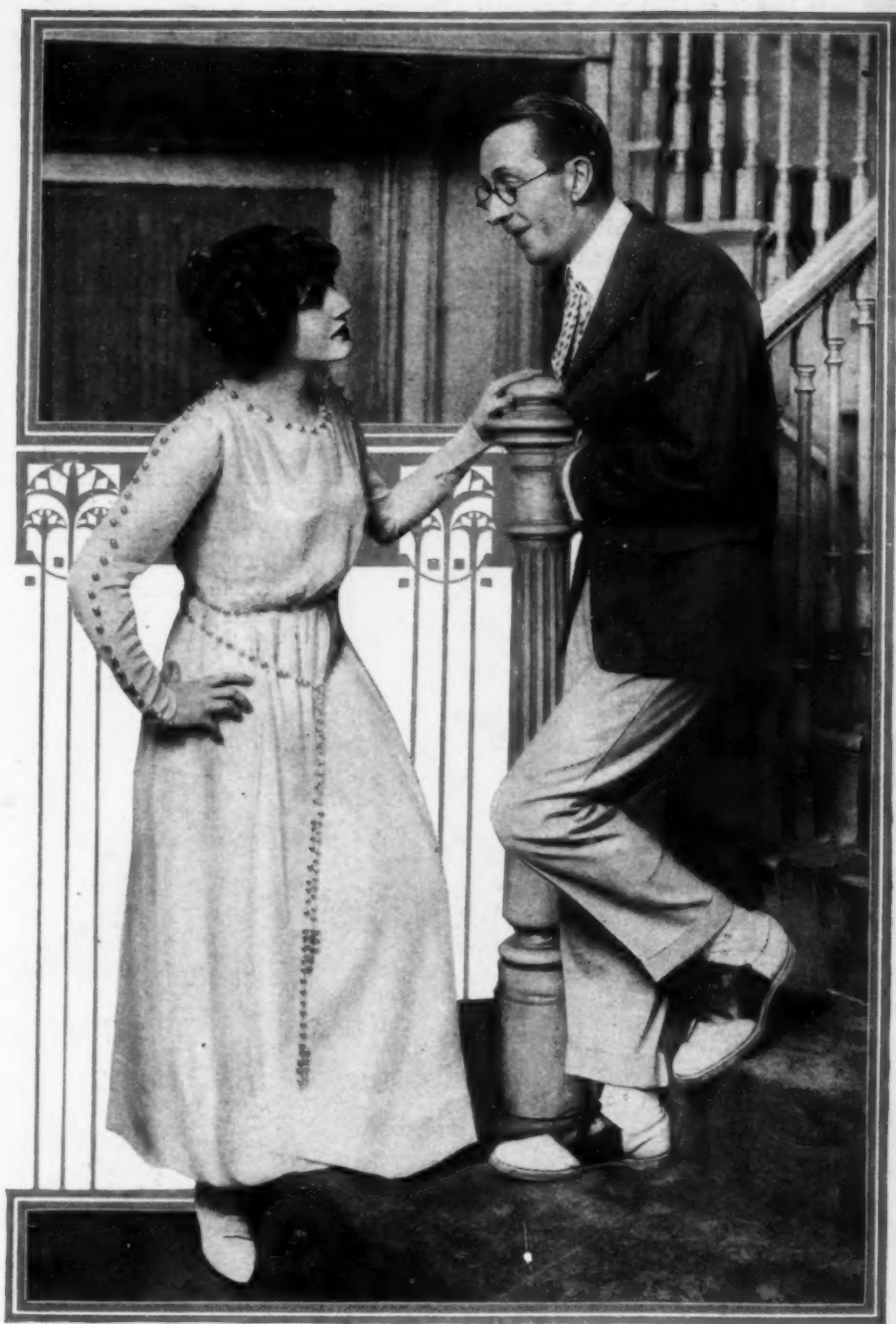
THE DOLLY SISTERS WHO ARE APPEARING AS THE TWINS IN "HIS BRIDAL NIGHT"

*Lazarus*—a husband who is supposed to have been killed in a railroad accident, but who comes back to his family after many years—because in 1908 he appeared as a returning husband in another play, "Mary Jane's Pa." The stories themselves are totally different, and the second one should prove as long-lived as the first, which was written by Edith Ellis.

"Very strange and very interesting!" said a woman seated behind me, as the curtain fell on the first act.

I sha'n't tell you the plot, which is unfolded by only six characters. Florine Arnold, who was with Dixey when he supported Mrs. Fiske in "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh," back in 1911, appears as the stout but timid keeper of a lodging-house,





VIVIAN RUSHMORE AND ROY ATWELL IN A SCENE FROM THE FARCE, "FAST AND GROW FAT,"  
BASED ON FRANK R. ADAMS'S STORY, "FIVE FRIDAYS"

*From a photograph by White, New York*

who finds herself saddled with two husbands, as she thinks, but is never quite sure. She is altogether admirable in the part. So is Eva Le Gallienne as the hard-working daughter. Both were together last spring in "The Melody of Youth."

The comedy work of Tom Powers, as the young lover, ranks with Henry Hull's emotional acting. Both Hull and Powers now get their first real chance on Broadway, and both have made good. The latter is a relative of the sculptor, Hiram

Powers, of "Greek Slave" fame, and has recently been featured in motion-pictures with the Vitagraph. I imagine that managers will now do their best to keep him away from the screen. Natural work such as he puts over is all too rare behind Manhattan footlights.

Only last month I said that as a rule American audiences are not particularly partial to pantomime. There are exceptions, however, and the success of "Pierrot the Prodigal," as performed at the Booth, means that for once commercial prosperity walks hand in hand with art. Rarely have I seen a more enchanting production, the music closely wedded to gesture, the settings ravishing to the eye and beautifully fitted to the purpose of the piece.

The pantomime was written in France more than twenty-five years ago by Michel Carré, with a score by André Wormser. Au-



CHARLES PURCELL AND LINA ABARBANELL IN THE NEW MUSICAL COMEDY, "FLORA BELLA"



PEGGY O'NEIL, VIOLET HEMING, AND RICHARD GORDON IN RICHARD WALTON TULLY'S NEW PLAY,  
"THE FLAME"

*From a photograph by White, New York*

gustin Daly saw it there, and was so much pleased that he forthwith brought it out at his theater in New York, casting Ada Rehan for *Pierrot*. Its failure was instantaneous — which was not entirely surprising. Miss Rehan's many admirers

were specially fond of her voice, and of course she was mute in this piece. Two years later the pantomime was seen again at Daly's, this time with Mme. Pilar-Morin in the lead. She had studied to talk without speaking at the Conservatoire



ALICE HASTINGS AND LUCY COTTON IN A PEACH JAM SCENE FROM THE COMEDY HIT,  
"TURN TO THE RIGHT"

in Paris under Carré himself, and this time the production ran for two months.

Winthrop Ames has come back into the theatrical field after a year's rest with this charming offering, for which no more appropriate setting could be found than his tasteful playhouse dedicated to the memory of our greatest tragedian. In the company of six we find an eminently capable American girl from Baltimore, Marjorie Patterson, as *Pierrot*, and Margot Kelly, from England, for *Phrynette*, the laundress who captivates *Pierrot* only to throw him over for the richer baron. The other rôles are all done by French players. The production has

taken the best theatergoers of the town by storm, and I think that for the first time in its history it is going to be difficult to get seats at the Booth.

This season pantomime will perhaps be the fad of the smart set; last winter it was ice-skating, introduced by the Hippodrome, whose new spectacle, "The Big Show," again brings us Charlotte and Katie Schmidt on the steel runners. "The Merry Doll" is the name of the vehicle, and, while the bite of novelty is gone, there is in its place an amazing amount of variety, including extraordinary feats by the Lamy Brothers, said to be the fastest skaters in the world.





IRENE FENWICK, WHO IS FEATURED IN THE EMOTIONAL PLAY FROM THE FRENCH,  
"THE GUILTY MAN"

*From her latest photograph by White, New York*



MURIEL MARTIN HARVEY, LEADING WOMAN WITH CYRIL MAUDE IN HIS NEW PLAY, "JEFF,"  
AND DAUGHTER OF MARTIN HARVEY, THE ENGLISH ACTOR

*From a copyrighted photograph by Bertram Park, London*

You will understand why Mr. Dillingham was justified in calling this "The Big Show" when I tell you that besides the ice scene there is Anna Pavlowa in a ballet, "The Sleeping Beauty," with music by Tschaikowsky and exquisite costumes by Leon Bakst; also the Mammoth Minstrels, four hundred strong,

introducing surprise effects not usually looked for in black-face. But space fails to enumerate the wealth of features that go to make this second Dillingham venture at the largest playhouse in the world an even more enjoyable entertainment than was its predecessor, "Hip, Hip, Hooray," now on the road. The same

collaborators are responsible for both shows—R. H. Burnside for the book, John L. Golden for the lyrics, and Raymond Hubbell for the music.

New York was short of musical shows for the first six weeks of the new season—the very time of year, one might think, when the managers would realize that this is the type of offering most in demand by visitors to the metropolis. Now that touring by automobile is so much in vogue, and with Europe practically closed, the summer finds cars in Manhattan bearing tags from many other States, mostly in the West. And what travelers are looking for in the line of entertainment when they come to Broadway is not drama or farce so much as it is a musical piece, the bigger the better.

The first new production of this description was the fourteenth offering of the New York season, and was not produced until August 30, exactly a month after the opening gun in the new theatrical year had been fired. "The Girl from Brazil," as it is called, is another importation from the German, with very pleasing music, and a book that is not as annoying as most. The Shuberts have given it an excellent cast with Frances Demarest in the name-part, and such excellent helpers in the comedy line as George Hassell and Maude Odell, while Beth Lydy and Hal Forde prove big favorites on the singing end. The number that gets the most encores is a male sextet, "Oh, You Lovely Ladies," built exactly on the lines of the famous "Oh, the Women," in "The Merry Widow." By the bye, didn't I hear somewhere that some one was planning to revive this famous prize-winner of nine years ago?

Frances Demarest was in another of the all-season runs at the New Amsterdam—"Mme. Sherry"—in which she sang the song that made it—"Every Little Movement Has a Meaning of Its Own." After that she went with "Gipsy Love," and last year she sang in "The Blue Paradise." More recently she created the part of *Miss Nomination* in the newest Winter

Garden offering, "The Passing Show of 1916."

While on the subject of musical shows, it made me sad to see James T. Powers in the farce "Somebody's Luggage." Not that he isn't funny. He is, to the saving of the show. My regret arose from being reminded so forcibly of "The Circus Girl," the like of which, alas, we see no more.

"The Circus Girl" was produced by Augustin Daly in 1897, and was one of the earliest of the musical comedies imported from London to score a big success in New York—a success that needed no apology, for its songs were tuneful and its humor really tangible.

Speaking of Mr. Daly, now that New York's famous experiment in endowed theaters has just entered a new phase of its checkered career as the Century Music Hall, it is pertinent to recall a prophecy made by the famous manager. It was part of a speech delivered in 1896, on the occasion of a dinner tendered to him by the Shakespeare Society. In commenting on the supposed advantages of a playhouse supported either by government funds or by private subscriptions, Mr. Daly said:

I do not believe the end is obtainable. When a production of the endowed theater fails to win popular favor, what an outcry! And this is sure to be at first the fate of the productions there, for the process of educating the public is slow. Then comes the climax—resignation of managers, resignation of directors, stockholders selling out in disgust. The quarrels of the leaders distract the public, which silently repairs to the music-hall again; and so the curtain is rung down on the endowed theater.

#### THE CINEMA'S BUGABOO

I am beginning to believe that the greatest disaster that could have befallen screenland, from the producers' point of view, was the enormous hit made by "The Birth of a Nation." Ever since, the film magnates have been seeking to duplicate, if not to surpass, that wonderful record. Fortunes galore have been squandered, the ends of the earth ran-

sacked, and antiquity tracked back almost to its remotest lair. Tom Ince came nearest to the coveted goal with his "Civilization," but that ambitious achievement was handicapped by the attempt to project propaganda into its story.

Now comes the man who gave us "The Birth of a Nation"—D. W. Griffith—with "Intolerance," the cost of which must make the bills for the Lincoln piece look like small potatoes; and yet the on-lookers are left cold. The effort to prove a point, to teach a lesson, is too palpably present. We gasp with amazement, to be sure, at the immensity of the work and expense that must have preceded the taking of the scenes showing ancient Babylon, but more often we are disgusted by the cheap melodrama of the "chase" features connected with the modern story with which they are interlarded. For "Intolerance" is divided into four threads, the two intermediate ones being the massacre of St. Bartholomew and the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in the time of Christ. You get a little bit of one, then a switch to the other, with ever and anon a flashing of Lillian Gish as the *Woman Who Rocks the Cradle*. This is no doubt a relic from the original title of the picture—"The Mother and the Law." The whole layout struck me as confused and lacking in unity.

Nor has Mr. Griffith the courage of his own convictions. The fall of Babylon is tragic, and so is the episode of St. Bartholomew, both going to drive home his point of man's inhumanity to man. But with his modern story of circumstantial evidence he spoils his whole situation by yielding to the popular demand for the happy ending and saving the innocent man from the gallows at the eleventh hour.

#### AT LAST A NEW PLAY FOR ARLISS

I am rather surprised that George Arliss has not gone in for the cinema. According to what he told a *Washington Times* reporter last spring, he "considers the eye the most powerful medium of expression

the actor has." He was giving advice to would-be players, to whom he also said that "an actor should be seen as little as possible off the stage and as much as possible on."

Mr. Arliss is an English actor, born in 1868, who came to this country first with Mrs. Patrick Campbell in 1901. His success was so pronounced that Belasco prevailed on him to stay over here and play the Japanese leader, *Zakkuri*, in "The Darling of the Gods." After that he spent some years in Mrs. Fiske's company, and in 1908 created the title-rôle in "The Devil," the drama from the Hungarian about which so much controversy raged. He launched forth in his biggest hit, "Disraeli," in January, 1911, and has only this season broken away from it to appear in the new comedy by Edward Knoblauch, "Paganini."

This is indeed a slight affair, and not up to the sort of thing we might expect from the man who gave us "Kismet" and "Marie-Odile," but it affords Mr. Arliss some excellent opportunities for character work. It also gives Cyril Maude's daughter, Margery Maude, a chance to shine, even though her rôle is the most unconvincing one in the piece—that of a young girl who is engaged to a handsome captain in the army, but who loses her heart to the elderly musician for no very particular reason except that the playwright pulls the strings. Happily Mr. Arliss has one or two plays in reserve, so he may now achieve his hope of acting in repertoire.

#### TWO FRAZEE FARCES

It would appear that if a manager would please the Manhattan critics, he must banish two of the good old stand-bys of farce—the policeman and the slamming door. Nimbleness of wit, rather than of feet, is the order of the day. I am driven to these conclusions by comparing the receptions accorded a couple of Frazee farces offered on Broadway within three weeks.

"A Pair of Queens" carried no fewer



than three minions of the law in its cast of ten, while two doors and a window-box worked overtime to conceal these same personages from one another. The reception of the piece was lukewarm. The reviewers deplored rather than praised the frantic work of the players, and within a very brief period the play was sent on to Boston, where its sister farce, "A Pair of Sixes," luxuriated on fat box-office receipts for many weeks a couple of years ago.

Came in its place "Nothing But the Truth," with never a door or the sign of a policeman; only a clever idea dramatized from Frederick Isham's novel by James Montgomery, whose "Ready Money" delighted so many of us a few seasons since. William Collier, released from a term in the movies, is starred as the broker who makes a wager of ten thousand dollars that he can speak the unvarnished truth for twenty-four hours.

The play has that wide appeal of getting home to all of us which makes it almost actor-proof, but Mr. Frazee has not hesitated to supply it with a capital cast, in which Ned Sparks, as a cynic, and Vivian Wessell, the wife with the accent in "The Only Girl," contribute many extra bright spots.

#### A FLAME THAT SPREADS DARKNESS

Should all prosperous playwrights expend their royalties in the fashion of Richard Walton Tully, one might well hesitate to wish them their initial success. Introduced to metropolitan attention by Belasco with "The Rose of the Rancho," Tully followed this early hit with "The Bird of Paradise," and that in turn with "Omar, the Tentmaker." Now, swollen with cash and ambition, he offers "The Flame" with himself as producer.

It is a talky piece. All the characters hold forth to the author's evident content, and, much of the time, to the audience's complete mystification. Having "arrived," Mr. Tully probably thinks it incumbent on him to preach, but as he mixes his sermon with voodooism, Carib-

bean hurricanes, and the inability of the United States government to protect its citizens, one is never quite certain of his text.

William Courtleigh, Robert Paton Gibbs, and John Cope seek manfully to make sense out of the rubbish, while an especially beautiful set is that of the old courtyard overlooking the Spanish Main, with a flight of steps winding up to the old mission church near the fly-gallery.

#### A SUNSHINY COMEDY

If playwrights must preach from the stage, would that they could all make their discourses so pleasant and so helpful as does Catherine Chisolm Cushing in "Pollyanna," a dramatization of Eleanor Porter's "Glad Stories." In July I spoke of the long engagements played by this simple little comedy in other cities. New York can do no less than take it to its heart as it did "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm," "Daddy Long Legs," and "The Cinderella Man."

To my thinking, "Pollyanna" is far better than the two last-named, and with Patricia Collinge as the little heroine who persists in looking on the sunny side, I see no reason why the Hudson should need to change its bill all season. The key-note of the piece seems to strike home to the men as well as the women. Coming out, I heard a young fellow say, as he glanced toward the street:

"I'm glad it isn't faining!"

Patricia Collinge was born in Ireland, and is the only one of her family to go on the stage, which has claimed her for seven years. Her present part is the first in which she has appeared as a child, so you may imagine that she is older than she looks—a fact that makes her work all the more remarkable. She was *Youth* in "Everywoman." Her first meeting with Douglas Fairbanks, in "The New Henrietta," led to her association with him as leading woman in "He Comes Up Smiling," "The Show Shop," and that clever vaudeville skit, "A Regular Business Man."

# Whispering Mary

by Margaret Dodge



WHISPERING MARY lived at the far edge of the back-yard colony. I could see her rooms from my window. She had a husband and two daughters. Whispering Mary really didn't belong to the back-yard colony. We had our own ideas of caste. It was all very well for the Ryans and the Smiths and the rest of them on the avenue to let furnished rooms, for Henson the Swede to mend broken drain-pipes, for Levey the Jew to wash soiled clothes, for Pierre the Frenchman to dry-clean wearing-apparel, for Klein the German to renovate damaged dogs, or even for Foley on the corner to sell rum.

They were their own bosses, and so, in a way, aristocrats. The damaged-dogs man even affected a superior professional air. But Whispering Mary was everybody's servant. She scrubbed floors for a living; therefore, she was not one of us.

While we posed as very democratic, the back-yard colony was at heart snobbish. We felt that the line must be drawn somewhere, and it was Whispering Mary's lot to be on the off side of it.

But she forced herself upon us with the persistence of her kind. Every morning she scrubbed the halls of the big apartment-house, starting at the top floor and working her sloppy way down eight flights of stairs and so on to the front door. Whenever I was in a hurry to get

somewhere, Whispering Mary was always in front of me, squat like a huge toad on the landing. Then I would have to stop, lift up my skirt, and thread my way through her litter of scrub-pails, brushes, broken packages of soap-powder, and piles of wet rags.

Apart from the inconvenience of getting out of her way, I resented the woman being there at all. Whispering Mary offended my artistic sense. She was not neat. Perhaps it was hardly fair to expect one to be neat in her business.

If only she had dressed suitably for her work, it would not have been so bad. She might have worn calicoes or ginghams or some other kind of wash goods. But Whispering Mary must scrub in woolen. She must sweat and steam; and every time she shifted out of the way to let me by, her woolen rags sent off kitchen-caught odors that suggested ugly, sordid things.

Moreover, her squat, shapeless figure irritated me. She seemed to be falling apart. A woman's last charm vanishes with her waist-line. But what did Whispering Mary care, so long as she was comfortable?

Her spongy, parboiled hands, clutched full of wet rags, traveled back and forth,

back and forth, over the dirty steps like huge, unwholesome insects. I always dressed in white. I had demonstrated that a woman could do her own housework and still keep dainty; and I didn't see why Whispering Mary couldn't have made a better showing, even if she did scrub for a living.

But, most of all, it was her voice that got on my nerves. She had chronic bronchitis, and always spoke in a husky whisper, a maddening wheeze. That's why they called her Whispering Mary, I presume. Anyway, I never knew her by any other name.

I might have sympathized with the scrubwoman in her affliction if only she had let me pass her in the halls without noticing me; but she was too humbly, too maddeningly polite. Every time she saw me coming she stopped scrubbing long enough to turn her face sideways, without really looking up, and to whisper:

"Good morning!"

She must have caught sight of me out of the tail of her eye. Somehow I never thought of Whispering Mary as having a face at all. I had really seen only the back of her head. Judging from the tousled look of her, I had no mind to see her face; and for a long time I never did.

I am a reasonable woman. I flatter myself that I am a kind-hearted woman. And, being both, I tried to discover why I felt so hostile to Whispering Mary.

It wasn't her rags alone, nor the smell of dirty water, nor her squat appearance. It was because she seemed to attach herself to me. She never spoke to any one else. She never even noticed any one else. I was the one distinguished recipient of her uninvited and unwelcome courtesy; and instead of being flattered by it, I resented it.

But I began my search for motives in the wrong way. If I had tried to figure out why Whispering Mary liked me, instead of why I hated her, my vanity, if not my sense of justice, would doubtless have made the result more satisfactory; but in self-justification I conjured up

everything in the woman that was offensive to me, and thus added fuel to the flame of my hostility.

At last I became so exasperated with Whispering Mary's persistent attentions to me on the stairs that I laid aside my dignity and openly discussed her with the janitress.

What I learned from that lady did not increase my regard for the scrubwoman. She had a husband who worked. One of her girls worked, too. Besides getting two dollars a week from our janitress for cleaning the stairs and halls of the big apartment-house, Whispering Mary was collecting twenty dollars a month for scrubbing floors in a big office-building over on Fifth Avenue. The janitress said that nobody in the neighborhood could see why the scrubwoman should work so hard when she was so well off.

After that, for a time, I looked down on Whispering Mary, figuratively as well as literally, as a sordid and a mercenary person, quite an inferior, who belonged on her knees, squat like a toad. I took as little notice as possible of her "Good morning" as I passed her on the stairs in my hurry to get somewhere.

## II

WHILE typical of the sordid, Whispering Mary's figure never took on the sinister until I began to connect her with "the corner." Foley's was the only corner I had ever thought about. "The corner" was two blocks farther up the avenue, where the boys and girls hung out. There was a drug-store there with brilliant windows, where a handsome pasteboard young man crooked a soliciting finger at you, and a beautiful pasteboard girl smiled into your eyes, no matter where you stood.

If you happened to pass by the drug-store when the lights were turned down, these pasteboard figures were quite startling. Opposite was a grocery-store with low-hanging awnings that threw deep shadows at night, furnishing a shelter for the more advanced stages of the love-

making that had begun in the glare of the drug-store lights.

I had never seriously thought of the corner. I had dismissed it as I had dismissed Foley's place. I had always been more annoyed at the group of boys and girls I saw there than by the loafers who lurched in and out of Foley's swinging doors. The boys on the corner seemed to be fresh, the girls brazen. None of them would ever amount to anything.

One afternoon I saw Whispering Mary's oldest daughter on the corner, hobnobbing with a blotchy-faced young man who wore a straw hat askew and cheap patent-leathers. He had acquired the typical East Side art of talking out of the side of his mouth without removing his cigarette. As I passed, I noticed that his forefinger and thumb were stained yellow—which, in the eye of the police magistrate, is an infallible sign of idleness and degeneracy.

This was the first time I had seen the girl close to. She was really very pretty, dressed all in white, and looked as much out of place on the corner as a lily in a garbage-can.

I knew that Whispering Mary always dressed her daughters in white, but white at a distance is deceptive. A dirty white dress often looks fresh and clean, if far enough off; but this girl was immaculate as to detail, from her glossy brown hair to her spotless pumps.

A woman can tell the quality of material at a glance, and I noted the fact that the girl's stockings were of good stuff. It seemed impossible that this dainty, impeccable creature could be the blowzy scrubwoman's daughter, yet it was a fact.

What was the matter with Whispering Mary, I wondered, that she permitted that sort of thing! Did she not know that sociologists tell us that the ranks of the women of the street are largely recruited from the homes of the Whispering Marys? Was it possible that she could be ignorant of the fact that the one purpose of this cheap but perniciously sophisticated

young loafer was to amuse himself at the expense of her girl? Could she not see that the corner was the direct road to the street?

The next evening, when the corner was in full swing, I saw her second girl there. In the morning I stopped on the stairs and asked Whispering Mary if she knew that her girls were going to the corner, and what she thought about it.

She wasn't a bit surprised. Yes, she knew her girls went to the corner to meet the boys. You couldn't blame them. They were young and pretty and naturally lively. Old heads didn't grow on young shoulders, she reminded me.

Besides, she added rather defiantly, her girls were not the only ones. Didn't the Mahoney girls and the Callahans go there, too? Then she turned to her scrubbing in a way that definitely closed the interview.

Whispering Mary's attitude filled me with resentment. The idea of those pretty little girls in immaculate white, whom I had come to regard as part of my backyard colony, hobnobbing with anemic, cigarette-burning youths brought the corner home to me.

Through much cynical talk and many newspaper stories I had learned that New York was a very wicked city indeed—so wicked that even the maternal instinct was subordinated to the commercial; but I had never believed it possible. After all, was I wrong? Were the cynics right? Might not this be a case in point? I made up my mind to keep my eye on Whispering Mary and see what she was up to.

### III

ONE evening a week later, through the open window of Foley's back room, I saw Whispering Mary sitting at a table, talking with the saloon-keeper over a glass of beer. There was nothing extraordinary in any Whispering Mary sitting in the back room of any saloon talking with any saloon-keeper; but those immaculate girls in white had lifted my Whispering Mary



out of the customary Whispering Mary stratum.

Besides, Whispering Mary's thrift was a byword in the neighborhood. Why, then, was she spending money for beer? There must be a reason. It looked wicked!

Two days later a van bearing the name of a Fourteenth Street piano-dealer backed up to Whispering Mary's rooms and left a large thing bundled up in burlap. In a very few minutes the switch-board girl in our house got busy, and the news spread fast. It had come at last—Whispering Mary's-piano. She had made a first payment, and Foley had gone security for the balance.

So Foley, the saloon-keeper, was backing Whispering Mary! The idea was utterly repulsive to me. It suggested the shocking contrast between the scrub-woman's immaculate girls and the abandoned creatures who frequented the back room of the saloon. There flashed up before me the first and last acts of "Ten Nights in a Barroom," with the intermediate acts left out.

But I didn't propose to be a mere recorder of what took place, like the gentleman in that famous temperance-play. I watched Whispering Mary's place every evening, and soon got an inkling of what the scrubwoman was up to. Instead of taking her girls away from the corner, she was bringing the corner into her home. Night after night I saw the vapid youths of the corner tango with Whispering Mary's daughters. Some of the brazen girls were there, too, and the fun was fast and furious. Every night it was the same.

At last my passive resentment became active; but while I was resolved to save those girls, I felt that I must be discreet. I knew it would be futile to plead with the woman, to point out the inevitable disaster of her course; so I put her out of the reckoning. She was unscrupulous, so I would be unscrupulous, too; but with this difference—her motive was to destroy, mine was to save.

I appealed to the Board of Health, and was told that they didn't concern themselves with any ordinary noises, such as the playing of a piano, between 6 A.M. and 11 P.M. I watched for any breach of this rule, but Whispering Mary circumvented me. Exactly at eleven the music stopped and the curtains were pulled down. Very likely Foley had coached the scrubwoman, for he himself had once or twice had trouble with the Board of Health on account of noise in his back room.

As I watched Whispering Mary's rooms, however, I could see that a change began to take place. It seemed to me that the brazen crowd was gradually being eliminated. The anemic youths of the corner disappeared one after the other, and in their places there came young men who looked as if they had money in their pockets. At least Whispering Mary was smart, if not scrupulous!

In sheer desperation I went to the police. I was told that I would have to get a petition signed by the neighbors. I knew that if I did so it would soon leak out what I was about; and as people in that stratum always misconstrue the motives of persons of a higher social level, life in the neighborhood would be made unbearable for me. But what little moral courage I had came to the rescue, and I determined to use this unpopular method of suppressing the nuisance. So I got Sergeant Hardy of the Twenty-Second Precinct on the telephone, and asked him to drop in. He promised to do so within the hour.

I now felt that I had committed myself to the attack; and immediately I became frightened and wanted to back out. I began to conjure up visions of what the people of the back-yard colony would do to me. A meddler, that's what they'd call me—a self-righteous meddler.

I didn't like the idea. I confess I had always courted popularity, and now I was courting most decided unpopularity. I wished that I hadn't called up Sergeant Hardy. I was half resolved to telephone

him that I had changed my mind. Should I or shouldn't I?

The question was decided by the ringing of the bell. There he was at last! There was no alternative!

I opened the door, and there stood Whispering Mary. Now I'm a courageous woman, in a way, but I'm blessed if I wasn't actually frightened just then. Perhaps it was my conscience. She must have heard, or guessed, that I was scheming against her. I was alone in my rooms, and she was a more powerful woman than I. I knew that women of the Whispering Mary type customarily argued with their fists.

I saw that she was all dressed up. This reassured me. When the Whispering Marys dress up, they have an ax to grind, not an ax to swing. Very politely I asked her to come in, and gave her a big chair near the window, while I perched on the arm of the couch and waited for her to speak.

#### IV

FOR some moments Whispering Mary stared straight into my eyes, and I stared back into hers, but in them I could read neither anger nor reproach. To say that I was nonplused scarcely expresses it, so I said nothing and waited.

"You make me in mind of myself," she whispered finally, looking all about my place.

"Do I, indeed? How?" said I, wondering whether I were dreaming or not.

She pointed to the daffodils on the mantel, glanced at my few good prints on the wall, and took in the bits of old pottery that I had picked up on Fourth Avenue. Her eyes grew positively tender as they lingered on the brass candlesticks that my great-grandmother had handed down.

"You have ideas above your station, just like me," she wheezed. "We love prettiness, you an' I do, an' we gotta have it, because prettiness brings us what we want!"

Evidently what she was saying was only

a lead-up to her purpose, and I thought it best to let her get to it in her own way.

"I made up my mind it warn't goin' to be enough for my girls to be housed an' fed an' clothed coarse, like I'd been," she went on. "They'd got to have prettiness in their lives—I was goin' to see they had it. I always fed 'em good grub an' dressed 'em in white, just like you dress. The first time I seen you on the stairs I noticed it. That's why I always said 'Good mornin',' when I seen you. I don't take time to notice most folks when I'm scrubbin'."

She paused, but I couldn't think of just the right thing to say in reply, so she continued:

"You see, ma'am, I haven't always scrubbed for a livin'. I never did any work except about the house till after the girls came. Then it was different. I took up dressmakin' on the East Side, an' worked up a good trade; but after a while the doctor said if I didn't stop bendin' over a sewin'-machine all the time, some-thin' would happen to me. I didn't pay no attention to what he said, an' my voice went, an' I have to whisper. Then my customers dropped off. I guess it made 'em nervous to hear me whisperin' around. But I was bound my girls should eat good an' dress like they'd been used to. To save on the rent, we moved away from the nice neighborhood where we'd brought 'em up, an' took some poor rooms down there. My first thought was what to do next. I couldn't be a servant, you know—makin' beds, an' eatin' in the kitchen, an' havin' some woman treat me as if she owned me, an' only gettin' two nights out a week."

She shook her head.

"No, I couldn't be a servant," Whispering Mary repeated reflectively. "Then, after we'd got settled in the new place, where no one knew me, I took up scrubbin'," she continued. "I got along fine till the corner began to bother me. You seen how it was—you spoke about it. I was too proud, ma'am, to

show you, but I felt just the same way as you did about my girls slippin' off to the corner. I'd seen the Mahoney girls an' the Callahans goin' to the corner; and I'd seen how their manners got worse an' worse from it, with the cheap talk that they learned from the smart Alecks there; but I'd never dreamed of my girls doin' it."

She shook her head, puzzled.

"Do you know, ma'am, it must be that a long, long time ago somethin' put it into the head of a girl to go to the corner? You know what I mean—somethin' that is stronger than any words that a mother or a father can say. Perhaps it's God—perhaps it's the devil. I tried to figger out why girls went to the corner at all. It wasn't just bein' bad, for my girls weren't bad. An' then it seemed to me this was the way of it. All young folks are just naturally lively, an' must have young company. If they can't find it nowheres else, an' can find it on the corner, they're goin' to the corner, an' there's nothin' in God's world that can stop 'em!"

Whispering Mary pounded the table with her clenched fist.

"But I made up my mind I warn't goin' to be beat that way, after all my hard work to make my girls love prettiness. The corner wasn't goin' to get 'em. For a while I was troubled how to do it; then it come to me like a flash. If I couldn't keep my girls from goin' to the corner, I'd bring the corner home where I could keep my eye on it!"

She paused again.

"But how could I do that? For a while I was up against it again. Then I got an inspiration, I think they call it. I'd get a piano!"

She paused and looked at me shrewdly.

"See?" she said.

I nodded sympathetically.

"Perhaps you think it was an easy job. I went to one of the places on Fourteenth Street, where they sell pianos, so much down an' so much a week. 'Send it up,' said I, putting down the first payment.

"'But we've got to have security for the rest,' said he.

"Well, I was that took back—it seemed as if everythin' was fightin' to keep my girls on the corner. However"—she sighed heavily—"I took off me coat an' went at it. I asked the grocerman on the corner above, where I'd traded for years, but he wouldn't do it. He said it was too extravagant for a woman like me to have a piano. Then I asked Klein, that doctors damaged dogs. He was willin'. He put on his Sunday best an' brushed up his whiskers, an' pinned the cross that the emperor give him to the lapel of his coat, an' went down to the piano-store with me. But when they found that he had nothin' but a lot of damaged dogs an' some kennels made out of dry-goods boxes for security, they laughed us out of the place. The only responsible one I could think of was Foley. I didn't like to go to Foley, because everybody hated him; but I put me pride in me pocket for the sake of my girls, an' I asked Foley to go security for the piano. When I told him what I wanted it for, he said he'd do it—bless his Irish heart!—him that everybody hates."

She pondered a bit, as if searching her mind for more details to give me.

"Well, I got the piano, anyhow. I invited all the young folks in, an' they hung around my parlor every night, instead of the corner. It was a novelty for 'em. But you see, ma'am," Whispering Mary continued shrewdly, "I only brought the corner to my house so as to get my girls back. I waited until some decent young fellers began to come in to enjoy the piano an' the good times we were havin', for I knew they would. Then, one by one, I began to weed out them corner bums till they was all gone, an' as nice a set of boys as you could wish to see was there to keep company with my girls."

"I understand!" said I.

"There was Jimmy Haggerty, the undertaker's son," Whispering Mary went on. "He gets good pay. And then young

Henson—his father's a plumber that works in a big dry-goods store—come in. You never seen them boys on the corner. An' young Henson brought along Harry Thomas, that makes eighteen dollars a week in a wholesale house on Broadway."

She paused, and I still wondered why she had come to tell me all this.

"Yes, that's what I've come to see you about," she resumed, as if reading my thoughts. "Young Thomas an' Lily—she's my oldest, you know, ma'am. They used to play an' sing together, an' he fell in love with her, an' now they're goin' to be married."

"You don't say so!"

Whispering Mary beamed.

"I wanted to see if you'd help her with her clothes, 'cause you have notions like myself, but I haven't had the chance to go around among the big stores like you."

"Indeed I'll be glad to help her with her clothes," I exclaimed, with tears of enthusiasm in my eyes. "Send her along any time to talk with me."

The scrubwoman held out her hand.

"Thank you," she said.

And for the first time I noticed that Whispering Mary had beautiful eyes!

## V

WHISPERING MARY hurried home to change, for she must be at work in the big office-building on the avenue at five o'clock. I got Sergeant Hardy on the telephone, and told him the whole thing was off, and he said he was glad of it. Then I went to the window and looked out over the back-yard colony.

Henson was standing at the fence, puffing a pipe, and inspecting a puppy, which the damaged-dogs man was holding up for him to see. Pierre was weeding his flower-beds, and his little Marie lay on a pillow on the floor of the sun-parlor, fast asleep. The fox-terrier was stretched out beside her, his nose on his paws. Levey and his pudgy boy were picking out pillow-slips and sheets from a huge clothes-basket in the middle of their yard, and pinning them on the line to dry.

Farther down the row I could see the tailors, some of them sitting cross-legged in their little shops and stitching away for all they were worth. The Armenians were practising one of their long-drawn-out chants. A black cat leaped from the top of the fence and disappeared under an arch of the big apartment-house.

Away on the far edge of the back-yard colony I could see the windows of Whispering Mary's parlor, and could hear the measured *tum-tum-tum* of "Sweet Rosie O'Grady." How I used to hate that blatant music! But now it had lost its blatancy. There was something fine about it. It had a saving grace. I had ignorantly cursed that piano, even when it was putting up a fight to save Whispering Mary's daughters from the corner; but I didn't know it then.

Whispering Mary's story had shed new light on back-yard colony life. She had her ideals, just like Klein, the damaged-dogs man, and Pierre, the lace-cleaner. Like them, she was putting her ideals to a splendid, practical use. She was far better than the poet who lies under a tree on the greensward and does nothing but dream.

I had resented Whispering Mary's comparing herself with me, but now in my heart of hearts I felt flattered by it. I wondered if I would be capable of rising from such outward degradation as the scrubwoman suffered to do big things for those I loved.

Certainly Whispering Mary was no longer my inferior. That she was my superior I was loath to admit, even to myself; so I settled it by the comfortable conclusion that neither of us was better or worse than the other. We were different, that was all—which was just what Napoleon said about nations.

I turned from my reverie and saw Foley, the much-hated Foley, leaning out of the window of his back room, listening dreamily to the banging of the piano. And for a moment I almost conceded that there was something rather good-looking about Foley's face!





#### SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED

THE story is told by Benjamin Enderby, a "confidential investigator," or high-class private detective, in New York. He has been engaged by Walter Dunsany, head of the famous house of Dunsany & Co., for a campaign against what Mr. Dunsany believes to be an organized and formidable corporation of jewel thieves. This serious undertaking grows out of a smaller affair investigated by Enderby—the theft of a pearl necklace from Irma Hamerton, a well-known actress. In that case suspicion pointed to Roland Quarles, Miss Hamerton's leading man; but Enderby found that Quarles was the victim of circumstances—circumstances arranged, apparently, by some influential enemy. The actual culprit was not discovered, however, though Enderby was convinced that another actor in Miss Hamerton's company—Kenton Milbourne, an Australian—was at least a party to the theft; and this belief was confirmed by a report from Australia, identifying Milbourne as one Evan Whittlesey, who left for America ten years previously, after being implicated in a bank robbery.

An important part in the campaign against the jewel thieves is played by Mr. Dunsany, who disguises himself as an English workman, assumes the name of John Mattingly, and secures employment in the gem-setting department of his own concern. By offering a valuable diamond in an East Side pawn-shop, he gets into touch with men who evidently make a business of purchasing stolen jewels. These sharpers discover, of course, that "Mattingly" works at Dunsany's, and conclude that he is stealing from his employers. One of them—a fat man, who calls himself George Pawling—arranges an evening rendezvous with him at a café on Lexington Avenue, to which Mattingly is to bring his loot.

Meanwhile Enderby finds reason to believe that his enemies have got wind of his activities and are planning a counter-stroke. His chief assistant, a girl named Sadie Farrell, reports that a strange old man has visited her office on Forty-Second Street—where Enderby himself never appears—and that she believes the intruder to have been Kenton Milbourne in disguise. A few days later Enderby finds himself trailed on the street. He lets the hostile detective follow him all evening, and late at night succeeds in trapping the man in his own private office—which is on Fortieth Street, quite distinct from the rooms where Sadie Farrell ostensibly presides. Laying a pistol on the table, he invites the captured sleuth to give an account of himself.

#### XXII—(CONTINUED)

HAVING laughed at the man, I felt almost friendly toward him. I offered him a cigar. He ignored it, and I put it away.

"What do you mean by this outrage?" he demanded.

I laughed afresh.

"Come off, Jack!" I said. "You must think I'm a downy chick."

At that he climbed down and asked for the cigar quite humbly.

"What do you want?" he muttered.

"Just a little heart-to-heart talk," I said, grinning.

"You can't make me talk," he growled.

I played with the automatic.

"There's not a soul in the building but ourselves," I said offhand.

The janitor lived on the top floor, but I supposed he didn't know that. He wilted right down. He had no nerve.

"I ain't got nothin' against you personally," he whined. "I only got my living to make, the same as yourself!"

"Who hired you to trail me?"

"I don't know what guy's got it in for you," he stammered. "Honest, I only got my orders from the office."

"What office?"

"If you queer me there, I'll lose my job. I'm a married man with two small children!"

"I'll tell them I put a gun to your head."

"Aw, let me go! I ain't got nothin' against you."

I picked up the gun.

"Come across! Who hired you?"

"The—the Manhattan Detective Agency," he stuttered.

The agency that he named was one of the largest in town. Of course I didn't know but what he was lying, but I meant to find out before I let him go. I turned a threatening scowl on him, and let my hand stray toward the gun again.

"I want the truth!" I said.

He watched my hand like one hypnotized. Little drops of sweat broke out on his forehead.

"For God's sake, mister!" he chattered. "I'm telling you the truth. I'm only a poor operative. I don't know who wants to get you!"

"You'll have to prove it," I said.

"Call up the agency," he suggested. "They're open all night. My name is Atterbury. I'm No. 68."

The instrument was at my hand. I got the number, and was presently answered by a brash young voice demanding to know what I wanted.

"This is Benjamin Enderby," I said, "of 15 West Fortieth Street. Have you an operative working for you named Atterbury, No. 68, on your books?"

"I don't know you," returned the voice. "We don't give information over the phone. Call around and let us look you over"; and the speaker hung up.

This little passage made me downright hot. I suppose it showed in my face when I looked at the detective again.

"Wh-what's the matter?" he said.

"They refuse to identify you."

He became still paler and clammier, if that were possible.

"Let me—let me call them!" he stammered.

I shoved the instrument toward him and waited. When he got his number he fell all over himself trying to explain.

"Who is this, Dixon? Oh, Jones! Jones, for God's sake! This is Atterbury. Square me, can't you? This guy Enderby—I mean Mr. Enderby's got me sewed up in his office. He's got me covered—for God's sake, square me, or I'm a goner!"

He shoved the instrument toward me. I kept one hand on my gun; inwardly I was shaking with laughter.

"This is Enderby again," I said into the transmitter. "Now you have the situation. What about it?"

"I know you!" cried the brash voice, now thoroughly scared. "I've got your name and number. If anything happens to our man, we've got you dead to rights!"

"Sure," I said, laughing. "You identify him, then?"

"Sure I do! And if anything happens to him—"

"That's all I wanted to know," I said. "Good-by!"

This time I did the hanging up. I got up and unlocked the door.

"Get!" I said to Mr. Atterbury. "If you take my advice, old man, you'll go into some other line."

He made grand time on the stairs.

### XXIII

THE head of the Manhattan Detective Agency was Dongan, a well-known and able man, once the head of the New

York Detective Bureau. He belonged to a school of investigation different from mine, but I respected his ability and knew him to be above reproach. I felt sure that in this situation I could not do better than go direct to him. I called next morning.

"So you're in the same line?" he said, looking at my card.

"That accounts for my business with you," I replied.

"What can I do for you?"

"Haven't your people told you what happened in my office last night?"

"No. Explain yourself."

"We *are* in the same line—hunting down crooks. The supposition is that we handle only clean business."

"What *are* you getting at?" he demanded, scowling.

"I came to ask you to explain why you're tracking me in the legitimate pursuit of my business. You will agree, I think, that it doesn't look right."

"I don't know anything about it," he said crossly. "I don't know you."

"I will wait while you inquire," I said mildly.

He went into his outer office. In about five minutes he returned, bringing a younger man.

"Well, you seem to have the goods on us, Enderby," he said ruefully. "It was a small job, and I was not consulted."

"Our client never told us that you were a detective," said the other man.

"I will make the excuses," said his employer dryly. "Describe the man who engaged us to trail Mr. Enderby."

"Gave his name as Lawlor. Fleshy man about forty-five years old, red face, big, black or dark-brown mustache; wears a cutaway coat and silk hat, very active in his movements."

"Has unusually large feet," I added, "which he slaps down in a peculiar way when he walks."

"Why, yes!" said the young man, surprised. "You know him?"

"Not so well as I would like to," I said dryly. "What address did he give you?"

"We haven't got his address."

"Where were your reports to be sent?"

I inquired.

The young man consulted a card.

"Box 229, Station I, New York."

"Well, that's something," I said, and rose. "When you report to him, please don't mention that I've been in."

"There will be no more reports," said Dongan shortly. "We'll return his money."

"If you want to make up to me for the trouble you've put me to, make him one more report," I suggested. "Simply tell him that upon learning that I was a detective, Mr. Dongan directed that the business should be refused."

"I will do that," Dongan said.

"When would you ordinarily report to him?" I asked.

"This morning," the young man replied. I guessed from his foolish expression that a lurid account of the previous night's proceedings had already been written.

"Good!" I said. "Will you please send it right off? I want to watch the letter-box."

Dongan agreed.

I hastened to Oscar Nilson's shop. An hour or so later I issued from under his hands as perfect a specimen of the snuffy, shabby-genteel old man as you could have found in any public reading-room from Chatham Square to Cooper Union. Oscar is a wonder!

By noon I was at Station I, which is up-town, on Columbus Avenue. Peeping through the glass front of Box 229 I saw that the letter from Dongan had not yet arrived; at least the box was empty. A little while later I had the satisfaction of seeing a letter with the Manhattan Detective Agency imprint on the corner shoot into the box.

For two weary hours thereafter I made believe to amuse myself with the store-windows of the block, up and down, both sides. Since I was the very picture of a harmless old loafer, my movements attracted no notice.

At last he hove in view, on foot. There was no danger of overlooking this man in a crowd. I spotted him nearly two blocks away. He came dipping down the street with his vast cutaway spread to the breeze and his feet slapping the pavement, just as the different operatives had described him.

With peculiarities so marked, a crook must needs be doubly-clever to keep out of the toils. I suspected I was up against a good one. There was little of the crook in his appearance. His fat, rosy face bore an expression of good-will to all men.

He issued out of the post-office with the open letter in his hand, and looking not quite so good-natured. He started north again, still on foot.

Walking at that rate, it was impossible for an apparently decrepit old man to keep up his character, so presently I was obliged to get on a car. It was an open car, and I could keep track of him for several blocks. Indeed, with the stops, we traveled very little faster than he did. When I got too far ahead, I got off and let him overtake me.

He turned west on One Hundredth Street, and disappeared in a cheap apartment-house, one of a long row. When I came abreast of the entrance I saw him in the vestibule, poking his fat fingers into one of the letter-boxes. Marking the position of the box, I passed on.

Returning presently, I saw that the box belonged to Apartment 14. The name upon it was R. Winters.

I do not mean to tax your brain with any more of Fatty's innumerable *aliases*. From one of the reports I learned that his nickname was Jumbo. Hereafter I shall call him that.

I loafed up and down the street, debating my next move. It is a rather crowded street, and I was not conspicuous. Many an old dodderer walks up and down watching the children's games with a vague glance.

I was very keen to have a look at the inside of Jumbo's apartment. Thinking of Irma and Roland, and of the necessity

of accomplishing something quickly, I am afraid I neglected the caution which Mr. Dunsany and I had agreed was necessary in all our proceedings.

The most obvious suggestion was to send Jumbo a fake telegram, calling him out; but in that case, when he discovered the sell, he would know that I was on to him. I wanted to be sure of a case against him first.

While I was still pondering the matter, Jumbo issued forth again, accompanied this time by a woman of his own age and type, who might have been his wife. From the style of her dress I judged that they were off on an expedition, and my heart beat high. I made sure that they were really leaving the neighborhood by seeing them on an Amsterdam Avenue car, bound down-town.

Returning, I rang the bell in the vestibule several times to make sure that there was no one else at home. The latch never clicked. I took advantage of some one's coming out of the house to enter, and climbed the stairs until I came to the door marked "14." I knocked without receiving any answer.

The doors of these flats are childishly easy to open, unless the tenant puts on a special lock. In this case it had not been done. A calling-card properly manipulated did the trick, and I found myself inside.

I shall not go into a lengthy description of the place, because there was nothing to describe. It was an ordinary flat of four small rooms, and looked as if it might have been outfitted complete by an instalment house. There was nothing to suggest the owners' tastes—at least, not until you came to the kitchen. Here there was an immense ice-chest crammed with the choicest and most expensive eatables and drinkables. That was where their hearts lay! There was also a great store of fine liquors and cigars.

One bit of evidence rewarded my search, and only one. There were no letters, no papers, not a scrap of writing of any kind, except two lines on a piece of



paper which I found under the blotting-pad of the cheap little desk by the sitting-room window. It had evidently slipped under and had been forgotten.

Of course, a clever crook is no cleverer than an honest man. He is sure to make a little slip somewhere. In the two lines of writing I once more beheld the famous cryptogram! I pocketed it in high satisfaction.

I had got as far in my search as the imitation Japanese vases on the mantelpiece. I was peeping inside one of them when I heard a slight sound behind me. I turned around, and beheld Jumbo swelling and purpling with silent rage in the doorway.

I confess that I was a good deal shaken by the apparition, though I managed to put down the vase with a good appearance of composure. He had stolen in as noiselessly as a cat. No matter how clear one's conscience may be, one is taken at a disadvantage when discovered in the posture of a burglar.

For a while we looked at each other in silence. I cautiously reassured myself that my gun was safe in my pocket. I saw that Jumbo was making a tremendous effort to hold himself in, and I realized that he had more to fear from a show-down than I had. I began to breathe more easily.

I had taken off my hat for coolness, and the wig was sewn inside the band. He obviously knew me. Perhaps it was as well for me. If he had supposed me an ordinary sneak-thief, he might have struck me down from behind with a blow of that mighty fist.

He began to swear at me thickly and softly. I remember wondering if he were going to have an apoplectic seizure, and hoping that he wouldn't, because it would spoil my case.

"I have you covered from my pocket," I warned him, in case his feelings got the better of his judgment.

"Yah! I'm not going to touch you!" he snarled. "I don't have to." He got his rage under partial control. "Go ahead

and finish looking!" he said with a grim sort of humor.

"I have finished," I said.

"Well, what did you find?"

"Nothing."

"You're dead right, you didn't find nothing," he triumphantly retorted, "because there ain't nothing to find! I'm straight, I am. I don't fear nobody. I don't know what you think you're after, but I'll tell you this—I'm sick of this spying business! I warn you to drop it, or I'll crush you as I would a fly! Who are you, you blamed amateur? I know all about you. You ain't got nothin' behind you. You're a four-flusher, a cheap skate! Keep away from me, or I'll make you sorry you set up to be a sleuth!"

The effect of all this was the opposite of what was intended. As soon as Jumbo began to brag and blow, something told me that he was not to be feared. However, for my own purposes, I assumed an air of confusion, and looked longingly toward the door behind him.

He was not at all anxious to detain me. He circled away from the door, keeping his front carefully turned toward me. I, in turn, backed out of the door, and he slammed it shut.

As soon as I got home, I made haste to translate my find. It proved to be even more important than I had hoped.

Received of Jumbo six thousand cash, three thousand stock, as my share of the blue pearls.

EVAN.

I allowed myself a little feeling of triumph. You will remember I had learned that Kenton Milbourne's real name was Evan Whittlesey. As for the mention of blue pearls, there were no others but Irma's in the world. This amounted to real *prima-facie* evidence, then—the first bit I had secured.

Would they find out that it was in my possession? It must have been temporarily mislaid, they were so careful in all other things. After my visit, perhaps Jumbo would begin to think back.

I was not left long in doubt as to the

matter. They struck at me with a boldness and skill for which I was little prepared.

## XXIV

HERE I will quote another report from the supposed John Mattingly, in the jewel-setting department of Dunsany's:

June 25.

To-day, as I came out of the work-people's entrance to Dunsany's, at noon, Jumbo passed by on the sidewalk. He tipped me a scarcely perceptible wink, and kept on, as I was with my fellow workmen.

I suppose he wished to catch me in the act, so to speak. In other words he wants to have it understood between us that he knows I work there. It is a step toward more confidential communications.

We met as usual to-night at the Turtle Bay Café, but something had happened in the mean time, because Jumbo was glum and sour. I pretended not to notice it. After he had had a drink or two, he volunteered the reason.

"A fellow broke into my rooms to-day—a sneak-thief," he said.

"No! What did you do to him?" said I.

"Oh, I half killed him and let him go. He didn't get anything."

This was obviously no explanation of his worried air. I continued to question him about the affair with a friend's natural curiosity, but suddenly he seemed to become suspicious, so I let it drop. I do not know if this has anything to do with your other activities, but I give it for what it's worth.

Later in the evening, when Jumbo's good humor was somewhat restored, he referred to our noon meeting in a facetious way.

"Thought you said you were out of a job!" he said.

I made believe to be somewhat confused.

"Ah, I wasn't going to tell everything I knew to a stranger," I said.

He made haste to commend me. He affected a certain admiration of my astuteness.

"You're a deep one, English! I bet you could teach me a trick or two!"

Have I mentioned that "English" is becoming my monniker?

By this time it is thoroughly understood between Jumbo and myself that we are both "good sports"—that is, dependably crooked. It saves a lot of bluffing on both sides.

Jumbo asked me what my job was at Dunsany's. I explained how I handled all the stuff that was sent in to be reset, my particular job being to remove the jewels from their old settings before handing them on to the expert craftsmen.

"What a chance!" said Jumbo wistfully. "But I suppose they have you watched."

"Oh, yes," I said, and I went on to explain all the precautions against theft and loss. "But, of course—" Here I made believe to be overtaken by caution.

Jumbo's little eyes glistened.

"Of course what?" he demanded.

I tried to change the subject, which only increased his eagerness. He kept after me.

"If a man knew the trick of making paste diamonds," I suggested, "and could substitute one occasionally! Of course, he'd have to make them himself. It wouldn't be safe to buy them."

Jumbo whistled softly.

"Can you make them?" he asked.

I confessed that I could.

"But wouldn't the fellows get on to you—I mean the experts you hand the jewels on to?"

As I have already told you, Jumbo knows next to nothing about diamonds, so I felt safe enough in my romancing.

"Not likely," I said. "The paste jewels are first-rate imitations at first. It's only after a while that they lose their luster. Of course, if I was found out, I'd pass the buck to the fellow who gave them to me. After the new work is returned to the customer, there's no danger until it has to be cleaned or repaired."

"How could a fellow keep all the different sizes and cuttings handy in his pocket?" Jumbo asked.

"In his pocket!" I said scornfully. "He'd be spotted the first day! You make the job last overnight, see? You weigh, measure, and test the stone you want, and bring the phony stone to match it next morning."

Jumbo was breathing hard in his excitement. I suppose he saw an endless vista of profits, the risk all mine.

"But ain't the stones all cut different?" he asked.

"Say, you want to know as much as I do," I said sarcastically.

He fawned on me.

"You're dead right, friend. That's your private affair."

After we had another drink I pretended to drop my guard completely. I left out the "ifs" and the "coulds," and admitted that my game at Dunsany's was as I had described it. To prove it, I brought out a couple of beautiful unset diamonds, which completed the conquest of Jumbo.

"It's a cinch—a cinch!" he cried. "A couple of good men could make fifty thousand a year easy and safe—fifty thousand after the commission was taken out."

"What commission is demanded?"

"Thirty-three and one-third per cent to them that disposes of the stones," said Jumbo evasively.

I thought it wiser not to question Jumbo any farther in that direction at present.

"You and me 'll be pardners!" he went on enthusiastically. "This is our little private graft. We won't let anybody else in, see? You on the inside, me out—we were made for each other!"

The coyer I made out to be, the more friendly was Jumbo. Finally, coming down to practical matters, he asked me what the stones were worth. I told him the market value.

"Of course, I can't get anything like near that," he said; "but I'll make the best dicker I can. I'll let you know before I close with them."

After some more persuasion I finally handed over the stones. I knew he wouldn't play me false while he thought there were larger gains in prospect.

We haggled for an hour over the division of the profits. I passionately refused to consider fifty-fifty, since the work and the risk were all mine. Half a dozen times the budding partnership seemed about to end; but we finally agreed on sixty and forty. By holding out as I did, I believe I have lulled Jumbo's suspicions forever.

The compact was cemented with a drink.

We talked on about diamonds, and I saw a new idea form and grow in Jumbo's little swimming eyes. Studying me speculatively, he put me through a lengthy cross-examination concerning my knowledge of precious stones.

"You're one of these here experts yourself, ain't you?" he said at last.

I modestly accepted the designation.

"What did you leave England for?" he asked suddenly.

"What's past is past," I said, scowling.

"Sure!" he said hastily. "I don't want to pry into your affairs."

He changed the subject, but I could see him still chewing over the same idea, whatever it was.

We were sitting, as usual, at one of the little tables down the side of the barroom. Jumbo excused himself for a few minutes. When he came back he talked about one thing and another, but it was manifestly to gain time. He glanced at the door from time to time. I wondered what he was saving for me.

At about ten o'clock a man came into the place alone and went to the bar, apparently without looking at us.

"Why, there's Foxy!" cried Jumbo in great surprise.

He hailed his friend, and had him join us at our table. They overdid the casual meeting a little. I began to suspect that Jumbo had telephoned this man to come and join us, and I waited with no little curiosity to see what would come of it.

The newcomer was a man of Jumbo's age, but looked younger, because he was slender and well built. He was one of the plainest men I have ever seen—not in the sense of being repulsive, but just plain. He was a blond with ashy, colorless hair and features of the hatchet type—that is to say, a sharp nose and a narrow, retreating forehead, with the hair beginning some distance back.

The name "Foxy" didn't seem to fit him very well, for he looked heavy-witted and stupid; but perhaps he can be sharp enough when he wishes. He had a dull, verbose style of talk, and a conceited air like a third-rate actor.

Jumbo informed me, with a scarcely concealed leer, that Foxy was a "good fellow"—in other words, a crook like ourselves. Verily, words come to strange passes!

Presently we got to talking about diamonds again, and Jumbo, in his character of the broker, exhibited the two he had just obtained from me. He did not, however, in my hearing say where he had got them; and a look at me was a sufficient hint to say nothing about our compact.

Presently I began to realize that Foxy in his heavier way was putting me through a sharper examination than Jumbo's. My opinion of his cleverness went up several points.

This man exhibited a considerable theoretical knowledge of diamonds, as of one who might have read up on the subject. For instance, he knew the characteristics, the weight, and the ownership of the world-famous stones. He had, however, nothing of the eye-to-eye knowledge of the experienced jeweler.

I apparently passed his examination satisfactorily. He glanced at Jumbo in a meaning way, and the latter said:

"Looka here, English, you ought to be able to make a good thing on the side by appraising diamonds."

My heart jumped at the possibilities this opened up. Was I about to land the job of diamond expert to the gang?

"The profession's overcrowded," I replied carelessly.

"I could put you in the way of a job occasionally," said Jumbo. "Some fellows Foxy and me knows would be glad to pay for a little advice about buying and selling stones."

I began to hope that the end of our labors might be in sight. The next question dashed me a little.

"Have you ever heard of Mrs. Levering?" Foxy asked.

Of course, I had; she is one of my best customers. I shook my head. He gave me some details of her history which would have astonished Cora Levering could she have heard them.

"She has a fine string of sparklers," he remarked in conclusion.

"Has she?" I said innocently. I had sold them to her.

"She's at Newport now," said Foxy casually.

"What's the use of beating round the bush?" said Jumbo in his hearty way. "Ain't we all friends together? It's worth a nice little sum to you, English, if you can find out and report whether it's the genuine stones that she wears around town up there."

"But I can't leave my job," I objected.

"Sure, he can't leave his job," said Jumbo at once.

"He can go up on the Saturday night boat and come back Sunday, can't he?" said Foxy.

The matter was so arranged. I suppose I am in for it next Saturday. Will you see that Mrs. Levering is warned in some manner?

In the mean time I am to be taken to see the "friends" who buy and sell diamonds. Here's hoping that this may prove to be the grand headquarters of the gang!

When we left the place, Jumbo, excusing himself, pulled Foxy aside and held a brief whispered consultation with him, which boded ill for somebody. Their faces were distorted with anger. Foxy took the west-bound cross-town car, and we walked over to the subway.

Jumbo—being anxious, I suppose, to make me feel that I had not been left out of anything—said:

"Me and Frank had a little trouble to-day. There's a bull poking his nose into our private business."

Hoping to hear more, I heartily joined with him in consigning the whole race of "bulls" to perdition.

"Oh, this is only an amateur like," said Jumbo. "He's running a little private graft of his own. He ain't dangerous. Me and Foxy's got it fixed to trim him nicely."

This was all I could get. I mention it, thinking that it may be of interest to you.

I suppose that if either of my worthy friends suspected that I was not a good fellow, my life would not be worth a jack-straw. The same menace lurks behind Jumbo's swimming pig-eyes, and Foxy's dull ones. But I am enjoying the spice of danger. The only thing that irks me is the monotony of the hours I spend at my work-bench in Dunsany's. I'll be glad when the game becomes livelier. This is life!

I will follow this long report from John Mattingly with a brief one from another operator, designated as A. N.:

June 25.

K. Milbourne came out of his boarding-house at 9.20 to-night. Walked east to Seventh Avenue, north on Seventh to Fifty-Eighth Street,

and east to a resort near Third Avenue called "Under the Greenwood Tree." This is a saloon and restaurant with a large open-air garden in the rear, where a band plays.

I waited outside for more than an hour. Then I went in to see if I had my man safe. I found there was a back entrance from the garden out to Fifty-Ninth Street, and he was gone. I'm sorry, but accidents will happen. I returned to the boarding-house. Milbourne came home at 11.35, and, judging from the light in his room, went directly to bed.

## XXV

As soon as I had read the two foregoing reports, which reached me in the first mail on June 26, I called up Sadie for the purpose of telling her to have the operative A. N. transferred to some other duty, as he had obviously outlived his usefulness where Milbourne was concerned. This was the day following my encounter with Jumbo in his flat.

Keenan answered the telephone. He said that Sadie had gone out after reading her mail. She had told him she didn't know how long she would be. We did not take Keenan far into our confidence. He knew he was not clever, poor fellow, and did not mind his exclusion.

What he said made me vaguely uneasy, for I knew of nothing to take Sadie out that morning, and she was very scrupulous about letting me know before embarking on anything new. However, there was nothing to do until I heard from her.

I plunged into the work awaiting me, which was quite heavy. I am only giving you an occasional report, or part of a report, which helps on the story a little. There were dozens of other lines which we were obliged to follow, but which never returned us anything for our work. The office end of my business is the part I like least.

At noon I called the other office again. Sadie had not come in, said Keenan, nor had she sent any word. I was downright anxious by this time. Sadie must know that I would call her up, I told myself. Surely she would never stay away so long without sending in word, unless she were prevented!



I called up her sister, with whom she lived. They had not heard from her there since she had left as usual that morning.

I spent a horrible afternoon, condemned to inaction, while my brain busied itself suggesting all the dreadful things that might have happened. Curiously enough, I thought only of the ordinary accidents of the streets. The truth never occurred to me.

The blow descended about half past four. Terrible as it was, it was to a certain extent a relief to hear anything. It came in the form of a special-delivery letter, mailed, as if in irony, from Station W. Within were two lines of that infernal cryptogram, thus:

SP JAH FUXLJG QCXQ WYE DFB&U  
OWKMZM&YW SY EUS UYHJL FVDH QM-  
WZCDBK QBC OYFG YB UOWX.

I speedily deciphered this, as follows:

If you return what you stole yesterday in the first mail to-morrow all will be well.

On the back of the paper was written another message:

They have got me, Ben. Save me!

This went to my breast like a knife. It was unquestionably Sadie's handwriting. The wild words were so unlike my clever, self-contained girl that it broke me all up. For a while I could not think, could not plan. I could only reproach myself for having put one so dear to me in danger.

Fortunately, old habits of work reassert themselves automatically, and my brain screwed itself down upon the hardest problem of my career.

There was not the slightest use in flying up to the flat on One Hundredth Street. There would be no one there. Neither could I call on the police without precipitating the catastrophe. If Sadie was to be saved, it must be by unaided wits.

I thought of Mr. Dunsany with hope and gratitude. In him I had a line on the gang which they did not as yet suspect. I immediately called up Dunsany's and asked if I might speak to Mattingly,

in the jewel-setting department. It was a risky thing to do, but I had no choice. Knowing how the gang watched Dunsany's it would have been suicidal for me to go there to meet him.

I finally heard his voice at the other end of the wire.

"This is Enderby," I said. "Do you get me?"

"Yes," he replied. "What is it?"

I had to bear in mind the possibility of a curious switchboard operator in Dunsany's listening on the wire.

"Are you going to meet your friends to-night?" I asked in ordinary tones.

"Yes," he said, "same as usual."

"Those fellows have played a trick on me," I said. "They have copped my girl."

"Not Sadie!" he said, aghast.

"Yes," I said. "It's pretty bad for me, isn't it?"

He took the hint, and his voice steadied.

"What do you want me to do?"

"Find out, if you can without giving yourself away, where they have put her."

"I'll try. Where can I meet you?"

"We can't meet; but watch out for my friend Joe, the taxi-driver. He stands outside your joint up on Lexington Avenue. The number of his license is 11018. It's painted on the side-lamps."

"I get you!" said Mr. Dunsany.

## XXVI

I CANNOT give a very clear account of the next hour or two. It was like a nightmare. I knew a young fellow who drove a taxi, which he hired from a big garage by the day. I was depending on him to help me out. I had often employed him.

I searched him out, taking suitable precautions against being trailed. He agreed to hire me his cab for the night, and I went to his room to change clothes with him. The vizored cap in itself was a pretty good disguise. I had made an engagement by telephone with my good friend Oscar Nilson, and he fixed me up so that my own mother wouldn't have known me.

In my anxious eagerness I arrived at the Turtle Bay Café long before the hour. None of the men I was looking for had arrived, and I was compelled to drive around the streets for another half-hour or more. I turned down the little flag on the meter, to avoid taking any business.

Twice I had a drink at the bar without seeing any of my men. When I returned again, however, I caught a glimpse of Mr. Dunsany's face at one of the tables, and I waited outside, as if for a fare who had gone in for a drink.

After a while I could stand it no longer. My torturing curiosity drove me inside. I went to the bar, taking care not to look toward the alcove where the three sat.

I found I could see them in the mirror without turning my head. Mr. Dunsany—or English, as I shall call him—and Foxy presented a side view, while Jumbo, seated farthest within the alcove, faced me. Foxy was Milbourne, as you have already guessed.

All the alcoves down the side of the room were fully occupied. Even if I had been able to secure a place in either of the adjoining compartments, I doubt if I could have heard any of my men's talk. They had their heads very close together.

There was an infernal racket in the place. I had to content myself with watching Jumbo's lips, wishing vainly that I might read them. I had to be careful not to seem to stare, for at any moment he might raise his eyes and meet mine in the mirror. My face was revealed in every line by the lights behind the bar.

As far as I could make out, Jumbo and Foxy were trying to urge something on English to which he objected. His reluctance was so well done that I could not decide whether it was real or assumed. Once more I was compelled to pay tribute to my friend and assistant. What a lucky chance it was that had led me to him. He was a wonder!

The other two were an ugly-looking pair at that moment, the one face gross and mean, the other sharp and mean. They

had dropped their masks. I wondered now how I could have thought, even for a moment, that Milbourne was stupid. His long nose, his close-set eyes, the whole eager thrust forward of his gaunt face, suggested an evil intelligence. Not for nothing was this man called Foxy.

After a while they seemed to come to an understanding. Jumbo sat back, and, putting his hand in his pocket, looked around for the waiter. I made a quiet exit to my cab outside, where I waited the turn of events.

They must have had another drink, for several minutes passed before they issued from between the swinging doors. I saw English's eyes go to the number on my side-lamps, which he read off with visible satisfaction. He gave me a fleeting glance as I sat nodding on the driver's seat. English was making out to show the effects of his liquor a little. The other two were cold sober.

"Say, boys," said English, "let's taxi it up! I'll blow."

I made believe to come to life, hearing that. Hopping out, I touched my cap and opened the door. Foxy frowned and held back.

"What's the use?" he grumbled.

"Aw, come on!" said English. "I ain't had a motor ride since I landed."

His slightly foolish air was beautifully done. Neither Jumbo nor Foxy liked the idea, but still less did they like calling attention to themselves by a discussion in the street; so they all piled in. Jumbo gave me a number on Lexington Avenue which would be about half a mile north of where we then were.

There was a hole in the front glass at my ear, for the purpose of allowing fare to communicate with driver. With the noise of the engine, however, I could hear no more than the sound of their voices. It seemed to me that both Foxy and Jumbo were admonishing English not to drink so much if he couldn't carry it better.

I found my number on a smallish brownstone dwelling facing the great

sunken railway-yards, and drew up before it. It was one of a long row of houses, all exactly alike. As my fares climbed out, English said to Jumbo:

"How long shall we be in here?"

"Not long," was the answer.

"Then wait," said English to me.

A glance of intelligence passed between us.

"You must like to throw your money away," grumbled Foxy, as they mounted the steps.

They were admitted by a negro man servant.

I examined the surroundings more particularly. The excavating of the great yards opposite had damaged the neighborhood as a residential district, and the tidy little houses were somewhat fallen from their genteel estate. Small, cheap shops had opened in one or two of the basements, and beauty parlors, dry-cleaning establishments, and the like, on the parlor floors.

Only one or two houses of the row retained a self-respecting air, and of these the house before which I waited was one. The stone stoop had been renovated, the door-handles were brightly polished, and the windows cleaned. Simple, artistic curtains showed within. In fact, it had all the earmarks of the dwelling of a well-to-do, old-fashioned family which had refused to give up its old home when the first breath of disfavor fell upon the neighborhood.

I should further explain that the houses were three-story-and-basement structures, with mansard roofs over the cornices. At the corner of the street—that is to say, three doors from where my cab was standing—there was a new building four stories high, which contained a brightly lighted café on the street-level and rooms above—in other words, what New Yorkers call a Raines Law hotel.

The three men remained inside the house about forty-five minutes, I suppose; but it seemed like three times that space to me, as I waited. They appeared at last, talking in slightly heightened

tones, which suggested that they had partaken of spirituous refreshment inside. Their talk, as far as I could hear it, was all in respectful praise of a lady they had just left. She was a "good fellow"—a "wise one"—"long-headed."

At the cab door they hesitated a moment, as if in doubt of their next move.

"It's early," said Jumbo. "Let's go back to the Turtle Bay!"

The others agreed. English let them get in first.

"Back to the Turtle Bay," he said to me. His lips added soundlessly: "She is here!"

When they got out again, English paid me off. His expressive eyes said clearly that he wished to speak to me further. The others stood close, and we dared not take any risk. I thanked him, touching my cap.

"Any time you want me, gen'lemen, call up Plaza 6771," I said.

They went inside.

I had given the first telephone-number that came into my head. It was that of an artist friend of mine who had a studio apartment on Fifty-Ninth Street. I hastened up there in the car, and routed him out of bed.

Artists are used to these interruptions. I had a little difficulty, however, in making myself known to a man half asleep. He was decent about it, though. He gave me tobacco, and, telling me to make myself comfortable, went back to bed.

In an hour or so the telephone-bell rang, and to my joy I heard English's voice on the wire.

"This you?" he said. We named no names.

"I get you," I said. "Fire away!"

He plunged right into his story, and, though plainly laboring under excitement, was admirably clear and succinct.

"She is imprisoned in that house. She was lured there this morning by a forged letter from you instructing her to go there for certain evidence. I did not see her. I understood from their talk that so far she is all right. The house is occupied

by a woman they call Lorina, or Mrs. Mansfield. Handsome, blond woman of forty; great force of character. She is a member of the gang, perhaps the leader of it. Anyway, they all defer to her. She has a better head than either Jumbo or Foxy. I was taken there to-night for the purpose of having her size me up. Apparently she approved of me. I understood that the girl is safe until to-morrow morning. Then they plan"—his voice began to shake here—"to—to do away with her."

"Unless I come across with the paper they want?" I interrupted.

"Whether you do or not," he said grimly. "They have no intention of letting her go. They plan to get you, too, to-morrow."

"How?"

"I don't know. I was not consulted."

"Go on!"

"The—the job they are trying to force on me," he faltered, "is to dispose of her body. They chose me because I am not suspected by you, not followed. I am to carry it out of the house piecemeal. Oh, it's horrible!"

"Steady!" I said. "I promise you that won't be necessary. Have you any more particulars?"

"Mrs. Mansfield lives alone," he went on. "She has three colored servants—two maids and a man."

"Did you find out where they sleep?"

"Yes—the two maids in the front room on the top floor, the man somewhere in the basement."

"Are they in the gang?"

"No. They do not know that Miss Farrell is in the house. The man, I understood, could be depended on absolutely—which means that he is ready for any black deed. He is as ugly and strong as a gorilla."

"What about the other internal arrangements of the house?"

"On the first floor there is a parlor in front, dining-room and pantry behind. On the second floor the front room is a sitting-room or office. The telephone is

there. Mrs. Mansfield sleeps in the rear room on that floor. Between her bedroom and the office there is an interior room, which can be entered only through Mrs. Mansfield's bedroom; and that is where Miss Farrell is locked in."

"Did you notice the locks on the doors?"

"No. I saw nothing out of the common. On the front door there is a Yale lock of the ordinary pattern."

"Anything more?"

"One thing—Mrs. Mansfield goes armed. She has a small automatic pistol with a Maxim silencer, which is evidently her favorite toy. I hope I got what you wanted. They were at me every minute. I could not look around much."

"No one could have done better!" I said heartily.

"What do you want me to do now?"

"Where are you?"

"In my own boarding-house. The party at the Turtle Bay soon broke up. The telephone here is in the restaurant in the basement, and everybody sleeps upstairs."

"You had better stay at home until morning," I said, after thinking a moment. "It is very likely that they are having you watched to-night."

"But I must do something! I couldn't sleep."

"There is really nothing you can do now. Stay where you can hear the telephone, and I'll call you if I need you. I'll call you anyway when I get her out safe. If you do not hear from me by, say, three o'clock, go to police headquarters, tell them all the circumstances, and have the house surrounded and forced."

"I understand!"

"To-morrow morning, if all goes well, you must go to work as usual. I don't mean that we shall lose all our work so far if I can help it. They must not suspect you."

"Don't take too big a chance, Ben. The girl—"

"Don't worry. The girl is worth a



thousand cases to me, but I mean to save both!"

## XXVII

I WENT home for some things I needed, and in less than half an hour I was back in front of the Lexington Avenue house, still at the wheel of my taxi. I had, however, changed my clothes in the mean time. I did not want the chauffeur's uniform, which I had worn earlier, to figure in any description that might be circulated in the gang.

Passing the house slowly, I surveyed it from pavement to roof. All the windows were dark. The basement windows were open, but were protected, as is customary, by heavy bars. The windows on the first and second floors were closed. The two on the top floor, which were above the cornice, stood open.

Turning the corner, I came to a stop outside the rear door of the saloon I have mentioned. It was after the legal closing-hour, but they were serving drinks in the back room. I went in and ordered a beer. The desk and the hotel register were in this room. You entered from a narrow lobby, from which rose the steep stairs.

I paid for my drink and took it. Choosing a moment when the waiter was in the bar, I rose to leave. In the lobby I turned to the right instead of the left, and mounted the stairs. There was no one to question me.

In one side-pocket I carried a small but efficient kit of tools, in the other a bottle of chloroform and a roll of cotton. My pistol was in my hip-pocket.

I went up the three flights, lighted by a red globe on each landing, without meeting any one. There was a fourth flight ending at a closed door, which I figured must open to the roof. It was bolted on the inside, of course, and I presently found myself out under the stars.

This building, you will remember, was half a story higher than the row of dwellings which adjoined it. It was therefore a drop of only six feet from the parapet

of one roof to the parapet of the other. Easy enough to go; a little more difficult, perhaps, to return that way.

From the parapet I stepped noiselessly to the roof of the first dwelling, and crossed the two intervening roofs to the house I meant to enter. I had nearly two hours before Mr. Dunsany would put the police in motion—ample time, I judged. Probably the first few minutes in the house would decide success or failure.

There was a flat scuttle in the roof, which, as I expected, was fastened from within. I could have opened it with my tools, but it seemed to be quicker and safer to enter by one of the windows in the mansard. In any case, I would have to deal with the maids on that floor, and probably they slept behind locked doors.

The cornice made a wide, flat ledge in front of the windows. It was a simple task to let myself down the sloping mansard to the ledge and creep to the window. Had I been seen from the pavement across the way, it would have ruined all; but the street was deserted, as far as I could see up and down. I have said that there were no houses opposite.

Pausing with my head inside the window, I heard heavy breathing from the back of the room. I cautiously let myself in. Then I could distinguish two breathings side by side, and knew that both women were sleeping in the same bed.

I got out my cotton and chloroform. Fortunately for me, negroes are generally heavy sleepers. I let each woman inhale the fumes before the cotton touched her face. They drifted away with scarcely a movement.

I left the saturated cotton on their faces without any cone to retain the fumes. In this way there was no risk of serious injury to the two women. The potency of the drug would soon be dissipated in the atmosphere.

It was a hot night, and the door of their room stood open. I didn't see, until too late, that a chair had been placed against the door to prevent the draft from

the window slamming it. I stumbled over the chair. It made little noise, but the jar caused me to drop the precious bottle, and before I recovered it the contents were wasted. This was a serious loss.

I crept down the first flight of stairs, and reached the floor where the mistress of the house slept. As I approached the door of her room, a shrill yapping started up inside. I cursed the animal under my breath. English had not told me that the woman kept a dog. It made things twice as difficult.

The noise sounded through the house loudly enough, it seemed to me, to wake the dead; and I heard somebody move inside the room. I hastened down the next flight of stairs and crouched at the back of the hall, outside the dining-room door.

Over my head I heard the bedroom door unlocked, and presently the upper hall was flooded with light. I was safely out of reach of its rays. I offered up a silent prayer that the lady would not be moved to descend the stairs, for I pictured her carrying the automatic with the silencer. True, I had my own gun, but for obvious reasons I was averse to firing it.

She did not come down. The dog, apparently, was satisfied that all was well, and ceased his yapping. From his voice I judged the animal to be a Pomeranian. Mistress and dog finally returned to the bedroom, leaving the light burning in the hall up-stairs, and the door was locked again.

With the dog and the lock on the door my problem was no easy one. I had to enter that way before I could reach my girl; and, before attempting to deal with the mistress, it seemed necessary to dispose of the negro in the basement. I went down-stairs, not relishing the prospect.

There were swing doors at both the top and the bottom of the basement stairs, which had to be opened with infinite caution to avoid a squeak. On the stairs between it was as dark as Erebus. On every step I half expected to find the

gorillalike creature crouching in wait for me, but when I finally edged through the lower door I was reassured by the sound of a rumbling snore. The dog had not awakened him.

He slept in the front room, which had originally been the dining-room of the house. I cautiously opened the door and looked in. A certain amount of light came through the area windows from the street-lamps. The negro's bed was against the wall, between me and the windows. These were the windows which were heavily barred outside.

When I saw the bars and felt the door, which was a heavy, hardwood affair, and had a key in it, I thought it would be sufficient to lock the man in. You see, I was pretty well assured that none of these people would care to make a racket.

However, there was another door leading to the pantry, and thence to the kitchen. This had no lock on it, and I was compelled to find another means of confining him.

Exploring the rear of the basement, I came across a trunk in the back hall with a stout strap around it. This I softly removed and appropriated. Going on through the kitchen out into the yard, I found stout clothes-line stretched from side to side. I cut down several lengths of it.

While I was in the yard, I made an important discovery respecting the lay of the back of the house. The lower story extended out some fifteen feet above the upper floors, so that Mrs. Mansfield's windows opened on a flat extension roof. These windows were opened and unbarred. There was no light within the room.

I returned with the strap and the lengths of rope to the negro's sleeping-room. He was still snoring vociferously. He lay on his back with his brawny arms flung above his head, like an infant, and his great chest rose like a billow with every inhalation. The bed was a small iron one, with low head and foot. It looked strong, but I knew that these things were often of flimsy construction.

First I laid my gun on the floor, where I could snatch it up at need. Then with infinite care I passed my long trunk-strap under the bed and over his ankles, and drew it close, but not tight. This was intended merely for a temporary entanglement.

He had not stirred as yet. I made a noose out of one of the pieces of rope and passed it carefully, carefully, over his two hands. During this operation he began to stir, and his snores were interrupted. I passed the rope round the iron bar at the head of the bed, and as he came fully awake I gave it a sharp jerk, binding his hands hard and fast. I knotted the rope.

I flung a pillow over his head and sat on it to still any cries while I made a permanent job of trussing him up. His great frame heaved and plunged on the bed in a paroxysm of brutish terror, finding himself bound. You have seen a cat with a rope around it. Imagine a mad creature thirty times the bulk of a cat!

Everything held. The bed rocked and bounced on the floor, but there were four closed doors between me and the woman sleeping up-stairs, and I hoped the sound might not carry.

It was all over in a moment or two. The ropes were ready to my hand. Every time he heaved up I passed a fresh turn under him, and presently I had him bound so tight that he could not move a muscle. True to the character of his race, he gave up the struggle all at once and lay inert.

There was a moment in which he might have cried out, when I changed the pillow for a gag made out of the sheet, but by that time he was gasping for breath. I knotted the gag firmly between his teeth. Smothered groans issued from under it.

I went over all the ropes twice, to make sure that nothing could slip. I expected, of course, that he would wriggle out in the end, but I only needed a little while.

Before proceeding further I gave my stretched nerves a moment or two to relax. My biggest task was still to come. Finally I stole up-stairs again. When I closed

the doors behind me, I could no longer hear the negro's smothered groans. The house was perfectly quiet.

As I softly crept up on all fours, stair to stair, I was busily debating how to open the attack. Locked door, silent gun, and dog made the odds heavy against me.

By the time I was half-way up the main stairway I had made a plan.

Rising to my feet, I mounted the rest of the way with a firm tread. Instantly the little dog inside broke into a frantic barking. I heard his mistress spring out of bed. I hastily unscrewed the electric-light bulb, and, throwing a leg over the banisters, slid down noiselessly to the first floor again. As before, I sought the security of the back hall.

She unhesitatingly opened the door. She was a bold one! I heard her catch her breath to find the hall in darkness. Her hand shot out, and I heard the click of the switch, but of course there was no light.

Instantly she began shooting. The light "ping" of her weapon had an inexpressibly deadly sound. The bullets thudded viciously into wood and plaster. From the direction of the latter sounds, she was shooting along the upper hall and down the stairs.

I knew she had ten shots, no more, and I counted them. After the tenth, running forward in the hall, I set up a horrid groaning. She was silent above. I kept up the groaning, and thrashed about on the floor alongside the stairs.

Suddenly she came running down. This was what I had hoped she might do. She reached the switch in the lower hall, and the light flared out. Instantly I sprang up the outside of the stairway, vaulted over the banisters, and stood half-way up the stairs—cutting her off, I figured, from additional ammunition.

She stood at the foot of the stairs, gun in hand, glaring up at me. I saw a large, handsome woman, with a rope of coarse, blond hair as thick as my wrist hanging down her back, and eyes like lambent blue flames. By her snarl I saw that I

had the advantage for the moment, but her eyes never quailed. To give her her due, she was as bold as a lion.

I know of few other women of her age who would look handsome under the circumstances. She wore a pink negligee robe over her night-dress. Her feet were bare—they were pretty feet, too.

The little dog sheltered himself behind her skirts, barking madly. I saw the woman glance down the hall. No doubt she was wondering why the noise didn't bring the negro.

"What do you want?" she demanded in a high and mighty tone.

"Never mind what I want," I returned. "Do what I tell you!"

"If you let me go to my room, I'll give you what money I have," she said.

"And load up again," I said, smiling.

"You can watch me. I have two hundred dollars in the house. It's all you'll get, anyway."

"That's not what I came for."

By that she knew me. She bared her fine white teeth and raised her gun.

"It's empty," I said, laughing. "I counted the shots."

She swore with heartfelt bitterness, like a man. I drew my own gun.

"This one is loaded," I said.

I descended a step or two, to enforce my orders, and pointed the gun at her.

"Open the front door," I commanded. "Go into the vestibule and close it behind you."

My purpose was to lock her between the two sets of doors while I searched for Sadie. She scowled at me sullenly, and for a moment I thought I had her beaten, for she seemed about to obey. But, perhaps reflecting that I didn't want to bring in outsiders any more than she, she took a chance. Suddenly putting down her head, she ran like a deer for the rear hall, with the little dog whimpering in terror at her heels. The door at the head of the basement stairs banged open, and she plunged down, calling on her servant.

I had to make a quick decision. Presumably the way was open to Sadie, but

there were plenty of knives in the kitchen, and if she liberated the man I should have to fight my way out of the house against the two of them.

I ran after her. A rough-house in the basement followed, with doors slamming, chairs overturned, and the ceaseless yelping of the dog.

She ran into the front room, saw the negro's predicament, and turned back through the pantries to the kitchen. I was close at her heels. She knew just where to find her knife, and she was out of the room again by the other door before I could stop her.

She ran back through the hall to the front room, slamming both doors in my face to delay me. She tried to lock the second door, but I got my foot in it.

She flung herself on the negro, sawing at his bonds with the knife. Fortunately, there was some light in this room. I dragged her off the bed. I had only one arm free on account of the gun. She tore herself loose, and, turning, came at me, stabbing with the knife. For a moment I thought my last hour had come; but I fired over her head, and she ran out of the room.

I stopped to look at my prisoner's bonds, and found them intact. In bending over him, my foot struck something on the floor. I picked up her gun. She had been obliged to drop it in order to use the knife.

I ran after her. As I set foot on the upper stairs, I heard her slam her bedroom door and turn the key. So there I had my work to do all over—but not quite all, for I had the gun now, and it was hardly likely that she would have another.

## XXVIII

I HAMMERED on the door with the butt of my revolver—a little noise more or less scarcely mattered now—and commanded her to open it. She was not so easily to be intimidated. Through the door she consigned me to the nether world.

"If you break in the door, I'll croak the girl!" she threatened.



I believed her capable of it. Remembering the knife she carried, I shuddered. We spent some moments in exchanging amenities through the door. I wished to keep her occupied, while I threshed around in my head for some expedient to trap her.

"All right!" I cried, giving the door a final rattle. "I'll get the poker from the furnace!"

She laughed tauntingly. Of course, I had no such intention. I had suddenly remembered the open windows on the roof of the extension. It seemed easier to drop from above than climb from below, so I went up-stairs.

The room over Mrs. Mansfield's bedroom was unlocked and untenanted. I took off my shoes at the threshold and crept across with painful care, to avoid giving her warning below. Unfortunately the windows were closed. I lost precious time in opening one of them a fraction of an inch at a time.

Finally I was able to lean out. She had lighted up her room, for I could see the glow on the sill below. To my satisfaction I saw that she had pulled down the blinds, but had not closed the window under me; for, while I looked, the shade swayed out a little on the draft. Evidently the possibility of an attack from that side had not occurred to her.

It was a drop of about fourteen feet from the window-sill on which I leaned to the roof of the extension below. I dared not risk it. Even if I escaped injury, the noise of my fall would warn her, and the minute or so that it would take me to recover my balance might give her time to execute her foul plan.

I believed that she had my girl locked in the inner room, for otherwise I should surely have heard from Sadie. This would give me one second, while the woman was unlocking the door—but only one second, and it was not enough.

The bed in the room I was in was made up. Always with the same precautions of silence, I fashioned a long rope out of the two sheets and the cotton spread. This

I fastened to the leg of a heavy bureau beside the window, and paid it out over the sill. Before trusting myself to it, I planned every movement in advance.

I must let myself down face to the building, I decided, until I had almost reached the roof. Then I must drop, and with the reflex of the same movement spring into the woman's room.

It worked all right. I was already inside when she turned around. This was well, for the door into the inner room stood wide, and I saw my girl there, lying on a couch.

Like a flash the woman had the lights out. Quick as a cat she was through the door, knife in hand; but I had got my bearings with that one glimpse.

I was hard upon her. I flung my arms around her from behind, pinioning her close, and dragged her back into the outer room. She was surprisingly strong for a woman, but I was just a little stronger. She spat out curses like an angry cat.

I dragged her across the room to where the switch was. I had to take an arm from her to search for it, and she renewed her struggles. It took half a dozen attempts. Once she escaped me altogether. She still had the knife, and I do not know how I managed to escape injury; but she did no worse than slit my coat with it.

At last I got the blessed light turned on. She was still jabbing at me with the knife, but I could see what I was doing now. The little dog fastened his teeth in my ankle. I kicked him across the room.

Between the two doors I have mentioned there was a third, evidently the door of a closet. It had a key in it. I dragged my captive to it, and somehow managed to get it open. I flung her in, knife and all, slammed the door, locked it, and leaned against the frame, sobbing for breath.

I was half blinded by the sweat in my eyes. The woman was all in, too, or I never should have got the door closed. For a while she lay where she had fallen, without sound or movement.

When his mistress disappeared, the dog ran under the bed. His little pipe was now so hoarse that he could scarcely make himself heard.

Presently the woman revived. Springing up, she hurled herself against the door with as much force as she could gather in that narrow space. The door opened outward, and the lock was a flimsy one. I saw that I couldn't keep her there for long. I ran into the inner room.

My dearest girl was lying on a couch, fully dressed and unfettered, but strangely inert—stupefied, seemingly. I was terrified by her aspect. However, her body was warm, and she was breathing, though not naturally. She was not wholly unconscious. Her head moved on the pillow, and her misty eyes sought mine with a faint returning gleam of sentience. It was easy to guess that she had been drugged, and that the effect was just now beginning to wear off.

I could not stop to restore her there. I gathered her up in my arms, snatched up her hat, which was lying near, and ran out through the bedroom.

I had no more than got the bedroom door locked behind me when the door of the closet burst open, and the woman fell out into the room. She immediately threw herself against the other door; but my mind was easier as regards that. It was a much heavier affair, and it opened toward her. I need not point out that there is a decided difference between bursting a door out and pulling it in.

I carried my precious burden down the stairs, murmuring phrases in her ear that I did not know I had at my command. She commenced to weep—a very encouraging sign. I believe I wept with her. She was dearer to me than my life!

I paused at the front door, to try to bring her to before venturing out into the street. Unfortunately, there was no water within reach, and I was afraid to take much time. The woman up-stairs had obtained some kind of a weapon, with which she was battering the door. In her insane passion she had forgotten all

considerations of prudence; and finally she managed to split one of the panels. The key, however, was safe in my pocket, and all that she could do was to hurl imprecations after us.

I opened the outer door a little, and the fresh air revived my dearest girl marvelously. Presently she was able to stand with a little assistance. Her first conscious act was to pin on her hat with a piteous assumption of her usually composed manner.

For a long time she could not speak; but she knew me now, and leaned on me trustfully. I knew how to reach her.

"Brace up!" I whispered urgently. "Pull yourself together! I need you. Show me what you can do!"

She smiled, as much as to say that she was ready for anything. Such was her brave heart!

We went out, closing both doors behind us. I fully expected to see a knot of curious people on the steps, attracted by the strange sounds from within; but the street was still empty. I suppose a lot of strange things happen in a great city that no one ever knows of.

We did not meet anybody until we got around the corner. Here a policeman stood, idly swinging his club and staring at the taxicab, speculating, no doubt, on its apparent abandonment, and wondering what he ought to do about it. The back room of the saloon was now closed.

I saluted him, inwardly praying that he would not be led to look down at my feet. I had managed to keep my cap through all vicissitudes, but I had no shoes on. I opened the door, and helped Sadie in.

"Here you are, miss," said I.

Then I ran completely around the car, to avoid the bluecoat, and cranked it. Even then I could hear, in the stillness, the muffled sound of the woman's blows on the door. The policeman was apparently unaware of anything amiss.

Fortunately, my engine popped at the first turn. The policeman's suspicions of me were gathering, but he was a slow-thinking specimen.

"Hold on a minute, fellow!" he said at last.

The car was then in motion, and I pretended not to hear him. Apparently he did not think it worth while to raise an alarm. I cannot tell you with what a feeling of thankfulness I left that neighborhood behind me.

I took Sadie direct to her sister's. We found that young woman in a pretty state of fluster. She was of an emotional type, very different from the matter-of-fact Sadie. Maybe she didn't give it to me for leading her darling into danger! But I was happy enough to be able to take it with a grin. By this time Sadie could speak for herself, and she took my part.

I telephoned from here to English at his boarding-house, as I had agreed. I still had more than half an hour to the good. He gave a restrained whoop when he heard my voice.

"You've got her?" he cried. "You're both all right?"

"Right as rain!"

"Ben, you're a wonder!"

At that moment I was quite prepared to believe it.

"How did you manage it?" he asked.

"Can't tell you now. The game is only starting."

"What am I to do?"

"Go to bed. Above all, keep them from suspecting you. The whole case depends on you now. I will write you, in care of Dunsany's, on Monday."

"Take care of yourself!"

"Same to you!"

Warning the girls to be ready to start for the country in an hour, I borrowed a pair of Sadie's brother-in-law's shoes and returned the taxi to its garage. I then went home, washed, and dressed myself in my own clothes.

Afterward I got out my own little car and went back for Sadie. By this time the dawn was breaking. It was Sunday.

I found Sadie quite her own self again, and flatly rebellious at being ordered to give up the game and retire to the country. In vain I explained to her that these

people had their backs against the wall now, and that our lives were not worth a farthing dip if they ever caught sight of us. Her sister was now on my side—not, however, without a few back shots at the one who had first got her Sadie into the crooks' bad books.

It was not until I said that I myself was going to lie low for a while that Sadie gave in. I'm afraid, at that, that her opinion of me suffered a fall for the time being.

The dearest girl was furious when she learned that I had almost been frightened out of my wits by the message from her that they had sent me, so much so that I had been prepared to drop the whole case to save her.

"That was what they were after!" she cried. "I had to write it, because she held a pistol to my head; but I was sure you would understand. If I had thought that you would let it interfere with the case, I would have let her shoot."

I shuddered. One did not know whether to praise or to blame such courageous folly. However, I privately registered a little vow not to let Sadie's enthusiasm lead her into danger again.

Meanwhile I hugged her right there, with her sister looking on. She promptly slapped my face—but not so hard as usual.

I took the sisters to that same little sanatorium at Amityville, Long Island, where Sadie had been before with Miss Hamerton. The doctor who owned it was an old friend of mine. A single warning word to him, and I knew they would be as safe as I could keep them myself.

Notwithstanding Sadie's violent objections—she said she had been lured to Amityville under false pretenses—I motored right back to town. I did intend to lay off for a day or two, but I had to put my office in order first. It was about eight o'clock when I got back to Manhattan. I put up my car and had an excellent breakfast. I thought that if I was going to be plugged, it might as well be on a full stomach.

I did not deceive myself as to the risk I ran in visiting my office, but it was absolutely necessary for me to secure certain papers and destroy others.

I took a taxi down, and ordered the man to wait. I cleaned everything up, in case the place should be entered during my absence. What papers I meant to take with me I deposited in a satchel, and took the precaution of strapping it to my wrist. Then I locked up and returned down-stairs.

I found that my chauffeur had moved away from the doorway a little; consequently I was exposed for a moment or two on the sidewalk. It was sufficient. I heard that deadly little "ping," and simultaneously a sound like a slap on bare flesh.

I did not know that I was hit, but I fell down. A pain like the searing of a hot iron passed through my shoulder.

"I'm shot!" I cried involuntarily.

I realized that I was not seriously hurt. However, I had no mind to get up and make myself a target for more. I pretended to close my eyes, and lay still.

My mind worked with a strange clearness. I saw the woman across the street. She was poorly dressed, with a shawl over her head, but I recognized the stature and the curves of my antagonist of the night before.

The usual gaping crowd gathered. Nobody had heard the shot but myself. While all eyes were directed on me, the woman coolly walked away across the park, tossing the gun into the middle of a bush as she went. I said nothing. It was no part of my game to have her arrested.

I suspected that the open-mouthed crowd surrounding me was full of spies, so I pretended to be worse hurt than I was, groaning and writhing a little. The wound helped me out by bleeding profusely. One youth with an evil face tried to take my satchel, as if to relieve me; but the strap frustrated his humane purpose, and he was afraid to proceed further under that circle of eyes.

Somebody had telephoned for an ambulance, and presently it came clanging up, with a fresh crowd in its train. The white-clad surgeon bent over me.

"I am not badly hurt," I whispered to him, "but please take me away quickly out of this mob."

I was carried to Bellevue Hospital, where I engaged a private room. My wound, a slight affair, was cauterized—I had in mind the possibility of poison—and dressed. Afterward I enjoyed my first sleep in twenty-four hours. I had left instructions that no one was to be admitted to see me, and that no information regarding my condition was to be given out.

By the next day I was almost myself again. I had already seen the reporters, and by the exercise of persuasion and diplomacy had managed to keep the affair from being unduly exploited in the newspapers. The police, good fellows, were hard at work on the case, but they could hardly be expected to accomplish anything without my evidence, which I did not intend to let them have.

The doctors did their best to persuade me to stop a while in the hospital and rest, but how could I rest with so much to do outside?

Having decided that I must leave the hospital, I had to consider how this was to be effected without exposing myself to a fresh danger. I had received a disguised telephone-message from English to the effect that our enemies were waiting for me. I decided to confide in the visiting surgeon, an understanding man.

"Sir," I said, "I am a private detective. I have a gang of crooks almost ready to be rounded up. Knowing it, they are desperate, and that is the explanation of the attack on me. Now, the chances are that the instant I step outside the hospital, I shall stop another bullet. What would you do if you were I?"

"Call on the police," he said, of course.

"I can't do that without exploding my charges prematurely."

As I said, he was an understanding man.



He didn't bother me with a lot of questions, but took the case as he found it. After thinking a while he said:

"How would it do if I had you transferred in an ambulance to my private clinic on Thirtieth Street? You'll be loaded on out of sight in the hospital yard here, and you will be driven right inside my place to be unloaded. You lie flat in the ambulance, and no one can see

inside without climbing on the step, and a surgeon sits there."

"Fine!" I said. "You're a man of resource."

He gave the order, and it was so done. Arrived at his private hospital, I dressed myself in street clothes, borrowing a coat to replace my bloody one. Then, calling a taxi, I had myself carried to Oscar Nilson's shop.

(To be continued in the December number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)

# WAS SHAKESPEARE A BARBER?

The Secret of the Bard's  
Private Life Revealed at Last



by  
Charles Veatch

THE versatility of the greatest of all dramatists is conceded by every one familiar with his plays. The many-sidedness of that masterful genius who "walked in every path of human life, felt every passion," is the world's wonder.

Students have devoted much valuable time and consumed many gallons of midnight oil in efforts to prove that Shakespeare followed most of the vocations open to mankind. It has been shown that he was a finished actor—not a "strutting player whose conceit lies in his hamstring," but an artist competent to hold the mirror up to nature. His attainments as an attorney, "versed in strict statutes and most biting laws," have been ably set forth.

That he was a warrior, a "manifold lin-

guist, and incomparable soldier," can scarcely be doubted; while his achievements as a physician, his knowledge of anatomy, and his profound accomplishments as an alienist and neurologist have been duly exploited by many writers. He was, moreover, a gardener cunning in the lore of plants as well as a subtle discernor of the secret springs of emotion; an ardent angler, who could sit all day upon a rock in the hot sun, like Patience on a monument, waiting to

See the fish  
Cut with her golden oars the silver stream  
And greedily devour the treacherous bait.

Shakespeare, too, was a skilled metaphysician and an expert logician. He was a courtier of rare grace, a diplomat, a

man of the world, a lawyer's clerk, a pedagogue with a rod in pickle for the youngster "creeping like a snail unwillingly to school." Some investigators in this fertile field have proved to their satisfaction that the poet was a butcher; and it has even been suggested that he conducted an intelligence office, from *Pistol's* remark in "Henry IV":

Have we not *Hiren* here?

In fact, Shakespeare seems to have been not only a jack of all trades but complete master thereof. A character in "Macbeth" remarks:

I had thought to have let in some of all professions.

Undoubtedly, when those words were penned, the poet must have had the barber's trade in mind. For I shall now proceed to prove that if internal evidence counts for anything, Shakespeare was a barber of skill and experience, possessing a thorough knowledge of his craft.

#### AN HONORABLE CALLING

My revelation will in nowise lower this "myriad-minded man" in the just estimation of the world. The mystery of shaving is not only ancient but honorable. In the poet's time it was counted as one of the learned professions, inasmuch as the barber was often called upon to perform the duties of a surgeon, such as bleeding a customer—apart from any accidental slip of the razor—and occasionally extracting a troublesome molar. That Shakespeare was familiar with both these operations may be shown by countless citations from his plays, such as the famous line in "Julius Caesar":

This was the most unkindest cut of all—

and the following from "Much Ado About Nothing":

I have the toothache, draw it.

Nor does the calling of a barber offer any obstacle to the exercise of the poetic faculty. On the contrary, it may develop and foster the divine afflatus, as witness

Jacques Jasmin of Gascony, Folez, the German poet, Burchiello, the Italian sonneteer, and Allan Ramsay, all reputed barbers whose effusions shed a golden glory over the tonsorial gild.

Shakespeare must have spent much of his time in a barber-shop. His plays are so full of allusions to the craft, and his *dramatis personae* exhibit such familiar knowledge of hair and whiskers, that it is difficult to avoid the thought that the "sweet swan of Avon" learned to shave before he began to sing. As he was not indifferent to those "attributes of awe and majesty wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings," it cannot be urged that he would consider barbering beneath his dignity, especially when royalty set the example. Note this passage from "Henry V":

It is no English treason to cut French crowns, and to-morrow the king himself will be a clipper.

In considering the theory that Shakespeare was a barber, it should be borne in mind that his father was a wool-comber—manifestly a calling closely akin to that of the hair-cutter. Here we have strong circumstantial evidence; for in early times trades commonly descended from sire to son. Perhaps the poet was articulated to his father, for he says somewhere:

Must I not serve a long apprenticeship?

Among the almost innumerable ways of spelling the poet's name we find "Shaxberd" and "Shakberd," variants possessing peculiar significance in the present discussion. Nothing could be plainer, even to a wayfaring man, that in the unsettled orthography of the period these are simply forms of "Shakebeard"—a descriptive appellation needing no comment. It points as directly to the barber-shop as does "Smith" to the smithy.

#### TWO STRIKING CRYPTOGRAMS

At this juncture it will be necessary to allude momentarily to the well-known

moribund and altogether tiresome Bacon-Shakespeare controversy—not to establish any truth of history, but to point a way out to misguided enthusiasts who, in their efforts to filch the poet's good name, find themselves deeply floundering in cryptogrammic mire.

Remembering that surnames were in many instances derived from occupations followed by their owners, we find the *King* in "Hamlet" saying:

You must not think  
That we are made of stuff so flat and dull  
That we can let our beard be shook.

Again, this is from "King Lear":

If you did wear a beard upon your chin,  
I'd shake it upon this quarrel.

These fateful lines contain two transparent cryptograms, wherein the real author's name is so thinly veiled that he who runs may read, swift Baconite though he be. It requires no arbitrary juggling with figures, no biliteral alphabets, no devious approaches by ways that are dark and tricks that are vain to show from these two passages that "Shakebeard" (Shakberd-Shaxberd-Shakespeare) is the only genuine "concealed poet," the mighty master who was not of an age but for all time.

Here is a revelation that shines like a good deed in a naughty world. In an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, as it were, the foundations of the flimsy Baconian structure are swept away, and the edifice, built up with so much care by its ingenious architects, vanishes like the baseless fabric of a vision, leaving not a rack behind.

After reading George Meredith's "Shaving of Shagpat," Dante Gabriel Rossetti declared that he was strongly reminded of Shakespeare. No doubt the suggestive alliteration of the title had something to do with the remark, but Rossetti had probably been already convinced that Shakespeare was a barber, after carefully studying the cumulative evidence of the plays. It is significant that "Shagpat" so closely resembles

"Shagsper," one of the variant spellings of the poet's name.

#### TONSORIAL PHRASES IN THE PLAYS

Although—perhaps owing to the great dramatist's personal modesty—no barbers appear in the throng of people who crowd Shakespeare's stage, there is no lack of the lingo of that profession. Kings and queens, lords and ladies, knights, fools, and country louts all use tonsorial phrases with an ease and gusto attainable only through expert knowledge.

"Did I not pluck thee by the nose?" says *Lucio*—a familiarity common to the fraternity at the present day. In "*Coriolanus*," *Marcus* exclaims with professional yearning, "Oh, let me clip ye"—whereat one is reminded of *Petruchio's* "Here's snip and nip and cut and slit and slash."

"Comb down his hair," suggests *Cardinal Beaufort*, and *Antonio*, of "*The Tempest*," longs for the day when "new-born chins be rough and razorable." The gay gallant in Shakespeare's time, "trimmed like a younker," went "prancing to his love, while his chin, new-reaped, showed like a stubble-field at harvest home."

There must have been shampooing in Shakespeare's shop. To prove it, there is *Iago's* boast:

I have rubbed this young quat almost to the sense.

*Hamlet's* "Aye, there's the rub," expressed his satisfaction in the soothing process. As the barber hastened his knotted and combined locks to part, mayhap he fell asleep, "perchance to dream," under the soporific touch of nimble digits. Yet even in a simple shampoo the poet points a moral, as when he makes the poor *Queen* in "*Richard III*" say:

The world is full of rubs.

It is generally believed that singeing the ends of the hair or beard, to stimulate growth, is a modern invention; yet this seems to have been a common practise

in Shakespeare's shop. *Hamlet* tried it, for he speaks of "singeing his pate," and *Lear* exclaims:

Singe my white head.

On one occasion, at least, the operation met with a disastrous ending; in the "Comedy of Errors" mention is made of one "whose beard they have singed off."

#### EVIDENCE HEAPED ON EVIDENCE

As an expert craftsman, Shakespeare assuredly took a laudable pride in his trade, but he was not blind to certain foibles of the profession. For instance, one of his characters thus refers to the barber's well-known penchant for putting the shaving-brush in a patron's mouth:

I will not ope my lips so wide that a bristle may enter.

As for hair-dye, *Buckingham* remarks:

That dye is on me which makes my whitest part black.

It was no doubt with full technical knowledge of dyes and restoratives that *Henry V* declared:

A black beard will turn white, and a curled pate will grow bald.

As it is now generally conceded that there is nothing new under the sun, the "lady barber" is of course an old story. Shakespeare mentions several, among them *Helen of Troy*. *Pandarus*, happening into the shop one day, noticed that famous damsel scrutinizing the fifty-two hairs in the sparse beard of *Troilus*, and he "could not choose but laugh to think how she tickled his chin with her marvelous white hand."

The shrewish *Kate* ranks high as a barberess. Especially is she noted for the introduction of certain novelties in the business, such as combing *Hortensio's* noddle with a three-legged stool, a proceeding well calculated to make each particular hair stand on end "like quills upon the fretful porpentine." Another, less famous, was *Bianca*, but the poet throws little light upon the lady's pro-

fessional qualifications. The only hint to show that she was connected with the trade is her expression in "Othello":

Come, you are next.

If further evidence should be needed to establish the theory herein advanced, it can be found in Shakespeare's requirements for a first-class shop. "Have napkins about you" is the advice in "Macbeth," and *Grumio's* command is:

Let the heads be sleekly combed and the blue coats brushed.

Every barber has an "oily palm," of course, and, like *Richard III*, is often "at charges for a looking-glass." Other specifications for the poet's shop are "best water brought by conduits" and "all the perfumes of Arabia," together with "unguents with whose sweet smell the air shall be perfumed." Emblazoned upon the walls might be seen *Perdita's* friendly greeting:

You are welcome to our shearing.

#### THE BARD AND THE LABOR QUESTION

In these days of industrial unrest it will be of interest to learn Shakespeare's position on the labor question. Not only do the dramas testify to the fact that he was a barber, but they contain evidence of his membership in a barbers' union. In "Richard III" a disgruntled party asks:

Shall I strike?

*Hamlet's* query, "Is thy union here?" and old *Polonius's* mention of a "walk-out" are significant indications that organized labor had secured a foothold in the poet's time. Moreover, in addition to many other corroborative passages in the plays, one of the speakers complains of a "sore injunction," and another declares:

At these injunctions every one doth swear.

The big commentators have unaccountably missed a point here. "To these injunctions" is the reading in most texts, and probably would have remained so but



for an erudite member of a local union, who suggested the emendation as above. The ingenious substitution of "at" for "to" lends new force to the lines, and will doubtless be adopted as a happy rendering of an otherwise obscure statement.

Such forceful expressions make it reasonably apparent that the attitude of the unions toward this legal process has not changed since Shakespeare's day, and are curiously prophetic of present conditions. Even the matter of Sunday closing did not escape the poet's attention, for he avows a brotherly sympathy for the barber "whose sore task does not divide the Sunday from the week."

Truly, "the barber's chair fits all," and many of the great bard's immortals have reclined therein. "I must to the barber-shop," says the peerless *Bottom*, "for methinks I am marvelous hairy about the face." We have *Falstaff's* word for it that *Bardolph* was shaved at least once, "and lost many a hair." His face, all whelks and knobs, would have been a grievous task for an artist even of Shakespeare's skill. It is pleasant to think of that arrant rogue with basin beneath his chin, his wonderful nose shedding a lurid glare, like a Pharos, over the wide expanse of snowy lather, and wincing under a dull razor amid the ribald gibes of *Fat Jack* and bombastic *Pistol*.

#### THE SHAVEN AND THE UNSHAVEN

*Marc Antony* was a steady patron of the shop, and a stickler for a close shave, being "barbered ten times o'er" prior to a call upon *Cleopatra*. "I could not endure a husband with a beard," said *Beatrice*, whereon *Benedick* hiked to the

shop, and the "old ornament of his cheek" went to stuff tennis-balls.

For the most part, Shakespeare's characters were well-groomed in this respect, but some of them exhibited a marked antipathy to razors and shears. There is no evidence that *Sir Andrew Aguecheek*, whose excellent head of hair hung like flax from a distaff, was ever tonsured. *Pericles*, too, "swore never to wash his face nor comb his hairs," nor must we forget our old military friend, "the soldier, bearded like the pard," who was so busy seeking bubbles that he had little time to think of a barber.

Another was a certain lover whose "browny locks did hang in crooked curls," while a most persistent offender was *Young Gobbo*, who sported "more hair on his chin than Dobbin had on his tail."

In his own shop Shakespeare was urbane and obliging to every patron, and so generous that he would not "quarrel with a man that hath a hair more or a hair less in his beard." This would be high praise for a journeyman working by the day, but when it can be said of an artist doing piece-work it is strong evidence to show that the confidence of the ages in Shakespeare's nobility of mind has not been misplaced. And in this respect what a marked contrast between the poet and the impatient *Hotspur*, who stood ready to meet all comers, even to "cavil over the ninth part of a hair."

We may rest serenely confident that Master Will Shakespeare had a good and lucrative business. As for his customers, he could say, with *Marie*, in "Twelfth Night":

I have them at my fingers' ends.

#### EFFICIENCY

ALL things are changing. Sudden gone from me  
The gods of prudence and propriety—  
Those little gods whose law was fear;  
The god of dauntless souls is here!  
Nor fast nor fawning will his favor gain;  
The weakling offers prayers to him in vain.  
But one commandment his: "Succeed!"  
"Do!" is his law, "I dare!" his creed.

Lannie Haynes Martin

# Friend Wife

by  
Frank R. Adams  
*Author of "Mr. Man."  
"Five Fridays," etc.*

A Complete Novel

"O F course, a barrier exists between every husband and his wife," Mrs. McDermott told Hyla when she went to her mother with her troubles. "It generally takes the wife about a year to find it out, and you and Fred have been married—let's see, how long is it?"

"Seven months."

Hyla choked up with a fresh sob as she answered.

"Well, I always said you were brighter than most girls," the elder woman assured her complacently. "You've found things out even earlier than I did."

"But why does there have to be any barrier?" Hyla insisted, raising her tear-stained eyes to search the wise, shrewd ones of her mother. "Before we were married Fred never kept anything from me."

"No, I suppose not. Even the men get into a sort of pink trance along about orange-blossom time; but it isn't their real nature, you can be sure of that. I suppose many a young man has kicked himself black and blue for babbling a lot of facts into the rose-tinted ear of a girl like yourself. There's something irresistible about spring love that makes people want to tell all

they know. What is it he is keeping from you now?"

"I—I don't know exactly, but sometimes when he comes home at night, and I tell him what I've been doing all day, he never says anything. Sometimes I catch him looking at me as if I were a complete stranger, and he wondered who I was!"

"Sort of a look as if he had caught an unfamiliar kind of fish, isn't it?" her mother corroborated. "I know that look. Every married woman does. And he isn't putting it on, either. He's wondering about you just as you are wondering about him. You really are strangers—that's what the barrier is. You've been thrown together under a lot of unusual and exciting conditions, and now, when the excitement is wearing off, you wake up to find that instead of the angel you thought you were mated to you are living with a commonplace human being, whom you don't know well at all, and whom you are not even sure you like very much."

"Oh, but I adore Fred!"

"Let me look at you." Mrs. McDermott lifted her daughter's chin and drilled into the soft, brown eyes with her own blue ones. "Not very convincing, my dear! I'm quite

sure you don't adore Fred, and it's just as well that you don't. It's hard to live up to adoration."

"But if we don't adore each other, it isn't right for us to live together!" Hyla wailed despairingly. "We must get a divorce!"

"Nonsense! Nothing of the sort!"

"What is there left in life? We've made a wretched mistake. Fred ought to have married that Thompson girl, and I suppose I was better suited to George Morse."

"There's a whole lot left in life. If you had married George Morse, you would have found the same phenomena manifesting themselves about him. He's a common or garden male man, just like Fred, and he wouldn't understand you any more than Fred does. The trouble with marriage is that it starts off at too swift a pace. People promise to love each other before they are certain whether they can live with each other. You swear eternal loyalty to a person you are not even sure is a good friend. There is so much 'I love you' talk flying around that you don't really notice that you've just barely met the individual who is becoming yours for life. Later, when some of the illusion wears off, you wake up some morning in the same house with a person whom you'd swear you never met before. You both of you wonder how you got there. The flood-tide of love has receded and left you high and dry on the beach of a desert island where you are the sole inhabitants."

"But, mother dear, you and father aren't unhappy!"

"Of course not."

"And father always talks over things with you!"

"Yes, but not as his lovey-dovey little wife, you may notice."

"No, I guess not," Hyla recollected many discussions at the family table, when she belonged there instead of at the head of a new establishment of her own. "Tell me the secret, mother. How do you do it?"

"There is only one way that I know of. Give up the worshiping idea, and make a friend of your husband. Don't demand a thing of him, and don't mention love in his hearing. Talk about the war, or the liquor question, or lawn-tennis. Make yourself as interesting as another man would be. He'll be so surprised and pleased that the chances are he will make a nuisance of himself hanging around you all the time. No man

spends his evenings at the club unless he is bored to death at home. Why do you suppose actresses fascinate married men? I'll tell you. It's because they can talk about something besides love; they've had some experience of life outside of a man's arms. They know some of the same things that men know."

"Then I suppose the way to win him is to become an actress!" suggested Hyla, with a faint tinge of sarcasm in her voice.

"That's one way," Mrs. McDermott acquiesced. "If you don't win your own husband, you'll win somebody else's just as good. There is something about the stage that gets the married masculine eye every time. They're like fish. They'll fall for a bit of bright-colored rag and a sparkling hook when a real nice worm won't tempt them. Not that you're a worm, dear; but you don't make the best of that wonderful complexion of yours, or of the fact that you are built like an Indian goddess."

"If you mean that I'm like a totem-pole, thank you for nothing. I've seen that kind of Indian goddess!"

Her mother ignored the interruption.

"I think, my dear, that you ought to have a copy of the 'Compendium of Marriage.' It's a book that tells everything a young married couple should know. Don't ask me who wrote it, for I've forgotten; but it contains some really wonderful advice written by some one who knows. It's interesting, too. Stop at the bookstore on your way home and get a copy. I loaned mine last week, or you could use that. You're just about ready for the advice it gives right now."

Hyla looked at her watch, and scrambled to her feet hastily as a result of what she saw.

"It's getting near dinner-time, and I must go."

"Why?"

"Because Fred will expect me to be home."

"So he will! Well, go anywhere but home."

"What do you mean?"

"Just that! Let him see what life really would be like if you were not in it. It's a wonderful tonic for love anemia."

"I wonder how it would work!"

"Don't stay here, though," Mrs. McDermott said hastily, in mock consternation.

"Although your darling husband does not hate me, the mother-in-law joke has been dinned in his ears for so long that he might suspect I had put you up to something. If you don't go home, don't even tell me where you'll be, because he'll be sure to call up here the first thing."

Her mother went on rattling off directions as Hyla gathered up her coat and furs and prepared for the street. She was not decided what course to pursue, but at any rate she would start out.

"Do you ever ask Fred if he loves you?" Mrs. McDermott asked, as Hyla stood with her hand on the door-knob, ready to depart.

"Of course, every day."

"Never do it again!"

"He always says he does."

"Yes, but sometimes he's lying. You're apt to get him in bad habits. Let him make up his mind about it without any help. That's the first lesson you will learn in the 'Compendium of Marriage.' Good-by, dear. Good luck to you!"

Mrs. McDermott kissed her daughter cheerfully and went to the window to watch Hyla as she joined the throng of pedestrians on the city street. As the girl turned back, her mother smiled encouragingly at her, and then left the window to sit for a long time thoughtfully by the gas-log, which blazed a blue optimism in the slightly old-fashioned living-room.

## II

FRED WETHERILL signed the last letter that lay on his desk, and wheeled around in his chair to face the young man who had been waiting patiently for ten minutes.

"Now, old man, I'm at your service," Fred told him, clapping him affectionately on the knee. "Why haven't I seen you for the last six months? It's even longer than that. I haven't set eyes on you since I've been married, and that's—let me see—that's over seven months."

"Uh-huh! I knew you were married. Of course, it doesn't seem so long to me as it does to you."

"What do you mean, George?" Fred looked up with an expression of questioning amusement.

"Not a thing unless you do. Every married man is entitled to keep his troubles to himself. That a picture of Mrs. Wetherill?" The visitor pointed to the framed photo-

graph that smiled insouciantly from his friend's desk.

"Yes," replied Fred, passing the picture to his friend for closer inspection.

"One of the sweetest-looking girls I ever saw," the other decided.

"She is," admitted her husband. "She's so sweet that—but never mind. Tell me about yourself, George. What are you doing, and why haven't you been around?"

"I'm chaperoning a vaudeville act," George confessed. "Give me a cigarette, will you, old man? That is, if you are still smoking those imported ones. I've got some of the hay-and-cabbage brand myself."

"I don't smoke cigarettes any more." Fred announced the fact shortly, with a certain condensed regret in his voice.

"Don't smoke cigarettes?" Incredulity stamped itself large on George's features.

"Nope. Hyla doesn't like it."

"Hyla?"

"Mrs. Wetherill," Fred explained. "That's her name—Hyla."

"Sounds as if you were advertising a confectionery-shop. If you don't smoke, where are the cigarettes you had left when you quit? I know a way to get rid of them for you."

"Thanks! I didn't swear off until they were all gone."

"Thrifty pig! Well, here goes one of the justly celebrated tobacco-trust bonfires." He lit a paper cylinder. "I love the smell of burning leaves!"

"So do I, in the autumn."

"Take one yourself, and you won't notice it so much."

Fred shook his head regretfully.

"No, thanks! You say you are chaperoning a vaudeville act. What do you mean?"

"Undine—ever heard of her?"

"It's a myth or something, isn't it?"

"Not this one. Undine and her diving seals. Head-line act at the Palace this week. Name in electric lights, and all that sort of thing. Myth—my eye! Flesh-and-blood girl; you'd think so if you ever saw her in her black swimming-tights. Um!" George blew a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling in an ecstasy of admiration. "Her measurements are exactly the same as those of the 'Venus de Milo' except at the hip, and there she's got Venus beaten an inch and a half. She can do a ham-and-egg dive from the spring-board into the glass tank in a way



that would make your mouth water. And she can do the Australian crawl faster than any kangaroo you ever met."

"You're her press-agent?" Fred Wetherill inquired politely and pointedly.

"I'm worse than that. I'm her *fancé*!" George made the announcement with considerable pride.

"Going to marry an actress?" Fred was genuinely shocked.

"She ain't a regular actress, I tell you. Undine ain't her regular name, either. It's Flora Cora Kelly. I've written a poem about it. If you like, I'll recite it for you."

"Not now—I have to get home."

"Get home—why? Is there going to be a party or something?"

"No, of course not; but Hyla will be expecting me."

"Every night?"

"Sure!"

"Great Scott! Did you marry a time-clock? Do you have a half-holiday on Saturday, or do you work three shifts all the year round?"

"You don't understand about marriage, I'm afraid."

"Sure I do! I've been the best man at half a dozen weddings, and I've been keeping tab on a lot of married couples I know. I probably know more about marriage and how to get along with a wife than any divorce lawyer in the United States and Canada. I'm in training, I am! I'm going to get married myself, and when I do I want to go at it right. See this little book? Name of it is the 'Compendium of Marriage'—vest-pocket edition. Best dope you ever read! I'm learning it by heart. Tells just how to make one's wife behave, and all that sort of thing. I'm going to know more about marriage before I start than Solomon did when they put him away for good!"

Fred regarded the pocket compendium respectfully.

"Do you mean to say that it tells how to get along with your wife all in that little book?"

"Yes. You ain't disappointed in the size of it, are you?"

"Not at all. I'm surprised that any one knows as much as that about the subject."

"It's a wonderful book, all right, and I'm a great believer in preparedness. Of course, Flora Cora Kelly—wonderful name, that!—is the sweetest girl in the world; but it's

just as well to know what to do even with the best of 'em. For instance, she has a habit of keeping one of her smallest pet seals in her bath-tub at the hotel, and I've got to break her of that. It strikes me that a pet seal might be sort of clammy to step on at night in the dark. Come on over to the Dutchman's, and as we sip some imported St. Louis beer I'll read you a few extracts from this book. Maybe it isn't too late to save you yet!"

George Fitzgerald got up suggestively and put on his spring overcoat—a loud and obtrusive garment which yelled for attention like a passing fire-engine.

"Come on, Fred!" he urged. "You aren't frozen to that chair, are you?"

"Pretty nearly. Heavens, man, where did you get that coat?"

"Oh, I'd forgotten you hadn't seen it before. Striking, isn't it? It came from England—imported, you know."

"Deported, you mean, don't you? I can't see why they didn't send it to St. Helena, though." Fred found his own modest overcoat and prepared to leave the office. "I'm not drinking anything, George; but if you want a glass of beer, I'll stop in with you and buy you a snifter."

"Good!" applauded George. "The saloon is the married man's refuge. That's right out of the book, good old 'Compendium of Marriage.' Be it ever so humble, the saloon is no place like home. Come on! Where's your cane? Oh, of course, you don't carry one. Married men don't, usually. I wonder why! It's the bachelor's badge, the gay and insolent symbol of freedom. It charms the roving feminine eye like the beating of a drum—mixed metaphor, but never mind—or like waving a red flag. That's the symbol of dynamite and danger, isn't it?"

They caught an elevator to the street level, where George Fitzgerald led the way unerringly to a retiring and modest bar which was down a long tunnel between two buildings. There he planted his friend opposite to him in a luxuriously padded but tiny booth with a table between them, and ordered cocktails, in spite of Fred Wetherill's protests.

"Haven't seen your old friend George for a deuce of a long time, and you can't refuse one little drink by way of celebration," Fitzgerald insisted, after the colored waiter had departed. "Besides, I talk better with a cocktail."

"How many have you had?"

"None! This is natural eloquence, so far; but I'm not really started. I want your advice and you want mine—or, if you don't exactly want it, you need it, and you're going to get it. We'll take your case first, because you're married already, and we've got to hurry or we may be too late. As it is, I don't see how you've got along this far without me. If I had really known you had that desperate look in your eyes, I would have mailed you this little book of advice to kind of keep you going until I got here. Seriously now, old top, out with it! Who threw sandpaper into the matrimonial gearbox? Come across with the witness-stand stuff. I'll tell you if an operation is necessary, or if all you need is a liver-pill. What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Absolute nonsense! You've forgotten that we lived together eight years in and out of college. I know you better than anybody in the world, your wife and your mother included. Maybe you can fool them, but the bunk doesn't go with me. I know when I see a worried man, and I want to find out why. Doesn't your wife love you?"

"Great Scott, yes!"

"Oh, I get you! Loves you too much, maybe?"

"No-o-o. That wouldn't be possible."

"Mentions it too often, then." George Fitzgerald sprang unerringly upon the fact, as if it were a mouse which had timidly ventured an inch from its hole. "I've got you! You're passing through the second stage of the matrimonial disease. You've both of you got a lot of left-over love-words in your vocabularies that don't quite apply to the way you feel toward each other now, and you haven't sense enough to invent new ones. It's all foolishness to call anybody your 'ducky daddieums' when in reality she is a grown-up woman too heavy to sit on your lap *all* the evening."

"How did you know that?" Fred Wetherill straightened up on his padded bench and shot the question accusingly at his friend.

"I didn't. I was generalizing. Glad I got your range, though!"

George Fitzgerald drank his cocktail. Fred, without noticing what he was doing, automatically imitated his friend.

In dismay the young married man discovered the empty glass in his hand.

"I promised Hyla I would cut out the booze!" he moaned.

"That was six months ago. Remember, my friend, the world do move. You were in a trance six months ago. No man ought to be held responsible for what he says under the influence of chloroform or wedding-breakfasts. Boy, another cocktail! You don't have to drink this one if you don't want to. Believe me, I would never have started you on the first if you had ever been a drinking man; but you know, as I know, that you never took more than two bracers the same evening in your life."

Fred smiled reminiscently.

"I never needed but two. Do you recollect that time we pasted the burlesque-show lithographs on the chapel bulletin-board?"

"I do, and I haven't the slightest difficulty in recalling the evening when you went swimming in the gymnasium pool made up like the president of the university and wearing a silk hat as your bathing-costume."

Fred sighed.

"We had a good time in those days!" he admitted wistfully.

"And we're going to have a good time these days, beginning right now," Fitzgerald assured him gaily. "Undine and the diving seals are booked for two weeks in this town, and I'm going to have a lot of time to spend with you."

"I'm not so sure that Hyla would—"

Fred paused in painful embarrassment, and to fill in the interval gulped his second cocktail nervously.

"You're not sure that Hyla will approve of me, you mean," George supplied glibly. "Of course not! Your doubt is quite reasonable. Leave that to me. Bring me face to face with this woman, and I'll have her eating out of my hand. It will do Mrs. Wetherill good to meet me. Probably she has seen too much of you. It may be a shock at first, but after she has known me for a while, and I've read her some extracts from this little book, why, she'll realize that life isn't so bad even after the rose-pink dream has faded a trifle. I'll show you both what a grand little thing real life is. She's listened to your line of talk for so long that she's stale. Take me out with you to dinner, and we'll give her a treat."

"She isn't expecting—"

"Good! I'll get a chance to see what she's like off her guard. Then I'll tell you

what's the matter, and advise you how to go about making your married life one long dream of contented bliss. No, you can't have another cocktail. We're going out this way. Watch your step, old man, and as you pass the bar grab a handful of those coffee-beans."

## III

PILING into a taxi, the two friends arrived at Wetherill's apartment in a state of youthful gaiety and reminiscent joviality that neither of them had equaled, or even approached, since their college days. Fred had forgotten his doubts as to the welcome that he and George might receive from Mrs. Wetherill. Of course, everything was all right; and even if it wasn't, doubtless his good old friend would be able to find some wisdom in that little pocket compendium of his that would cover the case.

The maid let them in. Even she looked reproachfully at the overcoat that George Fitzgerald wore, the imported garment which had been turned out by a war-crazed London tailor whose establishment, the owner of the coat declared, had been partially wrecked by a Zeppelin bomb at the moment when he was cutting it out.

"Where is Mrs. Wetherill?" the man of the house questioned, with the ring of authority in his tone, but not loud enough to be heard outside the confines of the reception-hall.

"Mrs. Wetherill is out," the maid informed him.

"Out!" Mr. Wetherill echoed, raising his voice slightly. "Did you say 'out'?"

"Yes, sir."

He looked at his watch incredulously.

"Why, it's a quarter past seven!" he announced. A strangled snicker drew his attention to his friend. "What are you laughing at?" he demanded.

"Nothing, nothing at all," George assured him, winking at the maid, who thereupon sniffed with indignation.

"I can't understand this," Fred went on, worried. Then, to the girl, he said: "Where did she go?"

"I don't know, sir. She telephoned an hour ago that she wouldn't be home. Dinner has been ready for half an hour," the maid observed reproachfully.

"Good!" This from George Fitzgerald, who was shucking his atrocious outer gar-

ment and hanging it up in the hall as if he had lived there always. "I am sorry Mrs. Wetherill isn't here, of course, but she will probably drop in during the evening, and I shall have a chance to get acquainted with her before I have to go to the theater to pick up Flora Cora Kelly. Flora Cora's act isn't on until half past nine, and she is never dressed until nearly eleven."

Fred had not entirely forgotten the duties of a host, and he led the way to the dining-room, but the fact of his wife's unexplained absence worried him. He asked several questions of the maid while she was serving—when had Mrs. Wetherill gone out, where was she going, how was she dressed, had she taken a taxi or walked? It developed that the missing lady had left on foot in the middle of the afternoon, dressed in a tailored suit, and had not announced where she intended to go.

"Maybe she is at her mother's," Fred surmised at length. "Of course, that's it! Probably her mother was ill or something, and she stayed over. I'll go there later and bring her home."

Thus he dismissed the subject until after dinner. The meal ended, he went to the telephone and got Mrs. McDermott on the wire.

"Is Hyla there?" he asked.

"Why, no," came the reply.

"Not there?" he asked in dismay. "Then where is she?"

"I haven't any idea. Isn't she at home?"

"No. She telephoned that she wouldn't be in, and I supposed she was with you."

"Why, she was here this afternoon, almost until dinner-time, in fact, and I believe she did say that she had to stop in at a friend's house on the way home, but I don't remember who it was. I am sure she is all right, though, because before she was married Hyla used to be able to take care of herself perfectly, and I never had the slightest fear even when she was out alone at night. She used to be an energetic settlement-worker, you know, and used to go trapesing across the city to the settlement two evenings every week."

"Thank you very much," said Fred. "Good night!"

"Of course your wife's all right," his friend assured him. "Probably she got tired of looking at you and has taken a little flier by herself, just for a change." He drew

the little red book out of his pocket. "There is something on page seventeen of this book that—"

"Confound your book!" the husband exploded. "I want my wife!"

The door-bell rang.

"It looks as if you are going to get your wish," said his friend, glancing rather apprehensively at the hall and locating his hat, coat, and stick in case it should be necessary to make a hasty exit. "If there is going to be any row, count me out!"

"There won't be," the husband assured him. "I shall tell her what I think of her conduct, but there will be no unpleasantness about it."

His friend smothered a laugh, but said nothing.

It was not Mrs. Wetherill who was responsible for ringing the bell. The maid who had answered the door now came in with a telegram, which she handed to the master of the house.

"The boy said there was no answer, sir."

"It's funny that Hyla telegraphed," was Fred's comment, after the maid had left the room, and while he was ripping the envelope open with his forefinger. "She can't be where she couldn't use the telephone."

"Perhaps it's not from your wife."

"By George, it isn't!" The young husband was scanning the apparently long message with eager interest. "This is from my uncle, Cato Dodd."

"The wholesale liquor man?"

"Yes."

"My boy, what a man to have for a relative! I went through one of his warehouses once, and I wasn't able to sleep for a week after that, for sheer envy. Is he sending you a keg or something?"

"No, he is dying," announced Fred; "or at least he says he is, and he wants to forgive me. We had a row a year or so ago, and he cut me off from his will and said he never wanted to see me again. That was when he married the fourth time; but the gay old boy is getting a divorce now, and perhaps he sees that I was right. He is a crabbed old fellow, but I always liked him, and he was mighty good to me. He wants me to come there to-night and bring my wife."

"Why the wife?"

"Well, he has never seen her, for one thing, and I suppose he wants to see what

she looks like before he dies. Here is the real meat of the telegram." He held up the yellow slip and read it. "'Told you I would never leave you a cent, but will remember your wife in my will if I like her. Come to-night.'"

"Then don't let me detain you, my boy. Of course, I am very sorry that your relative is sick, but I can't overlook the fact that anybody who has handled as much alcohol as he has in his day must have made at least ten million dollars in doing it."

"Twenty," Wetherill corrected.

"It is all the same to me," George announced, unimpressed. "When you mention any sum larger than a thousand dollars, you're speaking a language I can't translate. Where does this party live?"

"About twenty miles out of town. He owns a whole valley there—the Ocochokee Valley. There's a stream, called the Millstone River, and Uncle Cato put in a dam and made a waterfall. There is nothing in the valley but his estate and a small village up the river, where a lot of people that work for him live."

"I know the place," George admitted. "It looks like an Italian villa built by a Russian contractor with Chinese help. You get out there by a New York Central local, don't you?"

"Yes. There's a train about half past ten; but I can't go."

"Can't go! Why not, man? When twenty million dollars says 'Come!' there is no such word as 'Can't go.' Why can't you go?"

"Hyla isn't here, and he says he wants to see her."

"That's so! Well, it's up to us to get busy and find her, that's all. We've got a little better than an hour before train-time. Let's take a list of all the places she could possibly be and go hunting for her. Simple, isn't it? Don't give up the ship!"

"I guess you're right." Fred Wetherill was galvanized into sudden activity. "Come on, we'll take a taxi." He pressed a button on the wall, and after they had their overcoats on the maid appeared in response to his summons. "Give this to Mrs. Wetherill if she comes in before I return," he said, handing her the telegram.

"Yes, sir."

He slammed the door after him, and, preceded by his gaily overcoated friend, he



dashed down the steps and out into the night. It was raining dismally.

## IV

No taxi was visible, and they walked to the corner, which was the intersection of a main thoroughfare.

"More apt to get a cab here," Fred explained.

"Sure," George agreed with good-natured optimism. "Not that I care. I don't think the rain will hurt this coat much."

"On the contrary, it may improve it. Where in Sam Hill are all the taxicabs? There is supposed to be a stand here at this corner."

"Probably they were all picked up in a hurry when it began to rain. Perhaps we can telephone from somewhere. Let's go in here."

"That's a saloon!"

"Don't say it in that shocked tone of voice. This hospitable tavern was placed here by our good fairy to ward off the danger of pneumonia, which I can see is imminent. What will yours be?" This last in friendly inquiry as they brought up abruptly at the bar.

"I don't care. Order anything for me while I telephone for a taxi."

"Surest thing you know!" George called after his friend, as Fred disappeared into the telephone-booth. Then to the bartender he murmured confidentially: "Mix him one of those Peace Conference high-balls."

"Never heard of it. How do you make it?"

"Darned if I know. If you can't make 'em, give us a little sage tea with some catnip in it."

The bartender set out a lot of bottles on the counter.

"Mix it yourself," he suggested in friendly fashion.

George Fitzgerald poured a little from each bottle into a mixing-glass.

"Bartender," he observed reproachfully, "you haven't any mange-cure here. I thought this was a first-class place! No matter, I'll use this bay rum instead."

Fred Wetherill emerged from the telephone-booth.

"Taxi will be here in two minutes," he announced.

"Good! Hurry up and get outside of this." George handed his friend a large

glass of amber-colored liquid. "It will keep you from catching cold."

The bartender turned away to hide a smile and moved over nearer to the telephone, in order to turn in a police call if it became necessary.

"It's a long drink, isn't it?" questioned Fred, holding it up to the light.

"Yes, but there's only a little whisky in it. I diluted it," George explained candidly.

So he had—with gin and other equally potent ingredients.

"Oh, all right! Here's how!"

"How is that?" questioned George of his friend, when the empty glasses were reposing on the bar.

The other smacked his lips appreciatively.

"Best thing I ever tasted. Mild, isn't it? What is the name of it?"

"It's called the Wildcat Invigorator. I just made it up. I guess I'd better mix another before I forget how I did it."

"Taxi!" shouted a man at the door.

"Come on!" exclaimed Fred, dragging his friend away by the arm. "We've only a little time to find Hyla."

"But what if I couldn't remember how I mixed that drink?"

"It doesn't matter."

"All right! Whatever you say goes."

With a sigh of relief the bartender saw them leave.

The storm had accelerated in violence since they had entered the bar. The rain was coming down in drenching torrents.

"What a wonderful moon!" murmured George ecstatically, gazing with rapt attention at a near-by arc-light.

"Where to?" asked the driver.

"To Buckingham Palace, James," commanded George, with a wave of his hand. "And don't spare the horses!"

It seemed quite a long drive, but at length the cab stopped. The chauffeur dismounted from his seat and opened the door.

"Here you are, gentlemen," he advised the passengers.

"Here we are, what?" asked George with suspicion, gazing out through the sheet of water dripping off the roof of the taxicab and at the dismal trickle that dripped from the peak of the driver's cap. "Looks like Niagara Falls!"

"It's the Palace, sir."

"So it is!" George's eye caught a familiar lithograph in the brilliantly lighted lobby.

"We're at the Palace Theater, Fred. There's Undine. Come on! You must see her."

"Did we want to come here?" Fred questioned, a lurking doubt in the back of his mind forcing itself to the fore.

"Sure we wanted to come here!"

"Seems to me we started for somewhere else."

"No, we didn't. I'll leave it to Geoffrey here." George addressed the driver. "Didn't we tell you to drive here, Geoffrey?"

"You said the Palace, sir."

"See, Fred? It's all right." George had forgotten about the quest for Hyla. He got out of the cab and helped his friend to alight. "We've got to hurry, or we'll miss Undine's act."

They nearly did miss it, for it was well under way by the time they had arrived at their seats in an up-stairs box, the only places available. Undine, in glistening black silk swimming-tights, was disporting herself with all the abandon of a young fish in the glass tank which occupied half the width of the stage.

Her figure tended toward a boyish outline, but she was too graceful and rounded for any suggestion of masculinity to mar her charm. Where her low-cut bathing-suit left off, her skin was clear and firm and smooth with the perfection of splendid health. She was blond, with an abundance of hair, just now wadded under a sleek bathing-cap, from which a few curling wisps strayed coquettishly. Her face was pretty and animated—a blessing denied to many fair-haired beauties. She looked as if she might be interested in anything you told her, from personal pains to war news.

Undine's companion in the tank was an animal about the same size as herself, but a trifle thicker through the body—a young seal. There was little difference in their grace in the water, but when they came ashore the seal was clumsy and apparently uncomfortable.

The two performers were fond of each other—that was evident at a casual glance. The seal looked to his mistress constantly for petting, and when they were both under water he nibbled gently and affectionately at her toes. Every time they did a trick an attendant fed the seal a small fish.

"Prettiest girl I ever saw!" observed George fatuously. "If you could only hear the way she calls me her human seal!"

He made the remark in a tone audible throughout the entire auditorium. People turned to stare and then to laugh.

"Does she mean it as a compliment?" Fred inquired ruthlessly. "And when you do a trick, do you have to eat a live fish?"

George, oblivious to this scathing sarcasm, was still wrapped in contemplation of his adored one.

"Swims like an angel!" he declared. "Like a beautiful, golden-haired angel with fins and a tail!"

"Heavens!" exclaimed Fred, grabbing his companion by the arm.

"What's the matter? Watch that dive."

"Confound the dive! I've remembered where we were going when you brought me down here. We were looking for my wife!"

"What do you want of a wife?"

"It isn't a question of wanting one. I've got one. I remember now—telegram—uncle dying—forgiveness—wants to see wife—leave her million dollars, maybe."

"Great Scott, yes!" The mention of the million dollars galvanized into activity some remote cell in George's rusty thinking-apparatus. "I remember, too! Must find your wife."

He started to get up from his seat. Fred looked at his watch.

"It's too late. It's after ten o'clock now, and the last train leaves at ten-thirty."

The two young men paused, standing undecided in the box, while the curtain descended on the tank act amid a burst of applause.

"Don't give up," George encouraged. "There must be a way."

The seriousness of the occasion had cleared both of their minds to a certain extent. Both were determined upon action, though neither was quite certain in just what direction to apply his energy.

"No use to go out there alone," Fred decided. "Uncle Cato would think it was funny my wife couldn't grant his dying request. He'd only be sorer than ever at me for not bringing her."

"Come on outside," urged George. "I have an idea. I'll tell it to you in the lobby. Too many people here listening."

Fred followed his friend down-stairs and out of the theater docilely enough. He still felt a little dazed as the result of George's marvelous achievement as a drink-mixer.

"Now what's the idea?" he asked as they stood in the lobby.

"Undine!" George uttered the word dramatically, pointing to the full-length portrait of the girl standing against the wall.

"What about her?"

"Don't you get it? Uncle Cato wants to meet your wife. Wife missing. Uncle dying, must hurry. Any girl will do. Undine right here. I consent. She goes to meet Uncle Cato as your wife. He's crazy about her. All the men are. Leaves her all his money. You give her a couple of thousands for her trouble, and she turns the rest over to your wife. Cinch, ain't it?"

In his sober senses Fred would probably have questioned this arrangement, but now, in his somewhat misty mental condition, and under the stimulus of the necessity for speed, he did not attempt to resist his friend's agile reasoning.

"Will Undine do it?" Fred put a final doubting question.

"Will she do it?" George looked at him in amazement. "Why, that girl would die for me! That's how strong I am with her. You dig up a taxi and bring it around to the stage door. I'll go back and tell her to get ready. We'll have to hustle like the deuce or we'll miss that train."

There was no time to debate the proposition. Immediate action seemed like the only solution of the difficulty, if Fred wished to answer his uncle's request in person.

"All right!" he agreed, turning as he spoke, and starting on his way to search for a taxi.

It was still raining, but Fred found a vehicle before he got very wet, and the driver piloted him around to the stage door. There he waited in fretful impatience for his friend and the diving beauty to make their appearance.

George Fitzgerald must have been a magician at persuasion, for in less than five minutes he was ushering a fully dressed, elaborately coated and hatted young woman into the taxicab.

"Miss Kelly, allow me to introduce Mr. Wetherill, who will be your husband for the evening. Marquis of Queensberry rules will prevail. Shake hands, please, and take your corners!"

Fred responded in a sort of a daze to this facetious introduction. The girl was about

eight times as good-looking as she had appeared on the stage. Her clothes might have been a trifle ultramodish, but the brilliant personality of the wearer dominated them to such an extent that they did not seem bizarre. She had a smile of which you would be conscious in the dark, and you knew instinctively that when she was pleased at anything she grew dimples all over, just like the ones in her cheeks. Healthy babies are like that when they play with their astonishing toes.

"We leave from the Grand Central Station, don't we?" inquired George, who was still standing outside, waiting to transmit instructions to the chauffeur.

"Yes," said Fred.

"Wait! Freddy is going with us." This from Undine protestingly.

"Freddy?" exclaimed George. "Not on this trip!"

"He goes or I do not," the girl declared flatly. "He hasn't been petted yet for doing his tricks so nicely to-night, and he's very sensitive. If I should go away and forget him, he would cry all night."

"You can't expect to take a sea-lion with you to a strange house," George expostulated.

"Why not? He has perfect manners. He's a pet sea-lion, and he's a lot more intelligent than some people I know!"

This was a case where a reference to the vest-pocket guide to the science of handling women might have been of inestimable value to George. His fingers itched to consult the little book, but there was no time.

A stage-hand appeared with a case about the size of a steamer-trunk, with a handle on top, so that it could be carried by one person. A series of short, snappy barks emanated from the case.

"Put him in here," Undine ordered; "right here at our feet. There, there, Freddy! It's all right. I've got a fish for you in my hand-bag somewhere."

George stuck his head in.

"Listen, Flora! You can't take the fool brute. With him inside there isn't room for me."

"There's a seat beside the driver," she suggested significantly; "or you can hold Freddy on your lap in here. I'm perfectly willing to stay behind myself."

Fred Wetherill was anxious to preserve the semblance of peace.

"It's all right," he told his friend. "It's only for a short time, anyway, and perhaps Uncle Cato likes sea-lions. Hop in! We've only got about five minutes."

Grumbling, George climbed in. The taxi started up swiftly, skidded around the corner into Broadway, and fell into the current of traffic headed for Times Square.

When they arrived at the station and all had disembarked—including Freddy, the pet seal—the two young men got into an argument as to who should pay the taxicab bill.

Fred finally persuaded his friend that all expenses were strictly his affair, and George withdrew from the contest. Fred asked the driver what the meter read, and reached into his pocket for the dollar and eighty-five cents demanded. To his dismay, he found no money except a few small coins.

There was only one way out of the difficulty. He beckoned George to his side.

"My money is gone. Must have lost it, or else a pickpocket got to me there in the theater. I'll have to borrow your roll, if you don't mind."

"Not at all, old chap." Fitzgerald put his hand into his pocket. A look of surprise spread over his features. "It's not there! My cash is all gone, too!"

The driver of the taxi, who had been watching these maneuvers with suspicion, now left his seat, and, calmly appropriating the case which contained the trained seal, started to put it back into the cab.

"Here," cried Undine, "what are you doing? George, he's taking Freddy. Make him stop!"

"Sorry, miss, but I've got to have security for my fare. As soon as I get paid you can have your baggage."

George looked on helplessly.

"You can't do a thing like that, you know!" Frederick Wetherill protested gallantly. "That isn't baggage; that's a pet seal."

"Seals is baggage as far as I'm concerned," the chauffeur insisted. "In she goes!"

The carrying-case went back into the cab. Only for an instant was it alone. With scurrying feet, Undine crossed the intervening platform and hopped into the taxi after her pet.

"They sha'n't take your mother away from you, Freddy!" she cooed at the pris-

oner in the box. "No, they sha'n't! Nasty old man thought he'd play a trick on us, didn't he?"

"Say, what's the idea?" demanded a gruff cab-starter. "There's a line of taxies a block long back of you, trying to get in here. If you're going to stay all night, there's a garage in the next block."

"I'm waiting for my fare," the driver stated truculently. "I got a dollar eighty-five coming to me, besides whatever I get for a tip," he added pointedly.

"We've been robbed," George explained.

"That's the regular fare," protested the chauffeur, pointing to his meter. "I'm an honest man."

"What train did you want, anyway?" the starter inquired.

"We were trying to catch the ten-thirty to Ocochokee Valley," Fred volunteered.

"Well, that train left three minutes ago, and as there ain't another until to-morrow you got plenty of time to argue about this somewhere else. Pull up ahead of the line there, and give these people a chance to make a landing."

## V

A HASTY consultation of watches, and a comparison between them and a station clock near by, proved that the starter was right. Reluctantly they abandoned their tenure of the platform and moved forward, a divided company, out of the way of the arriving and departing cabs.

Undine and Freddy occupied the cab, while George and Fred walked along the sidewalk. In a comparatively clear spot they drew together again.

"What are you gents going to do?" the driver inquired more respectfully. The display of watches which his fares had made a few moments previous had partially convinced him that they were not the dead-beats he had at first supposed.

"I suppose we might drive out to my apartment," suggested Fred, without any enthusiasm. "Probably I can dig up some cash there."

"But good Heavens, man!" George interjected in a shocked tone of voice. "That would mean giving up the million dollars your uncle is probably going to slip you."

Fred shrugged his shoulders.

"What else is there to do? We've missed the last train."



"And to-morrow will probably be too late." George walked up and down in an ecstasy of despair. "There must be some way to beat this!"

Silence ensued among the divided party in the taxi and on the platform—silence save for the occasional uncomfortable bark of the pet seal, who apparently did not understand the meaning of the delay.

"I've got it," announced George. "We'll drive out there in the car. It's funny I never thought of that before!"

"It's funny you thought of it now! How are you going to do that without any money?"

"You're too blamed practical, Fred. You always did spoil my best schemes with some question like that; but I've got you beat this time. We'll tell the taxi-driver all about it."

"About what?"

"About the million dollars. We'll agree to pay just double whatever his meter registers out there and back, if he'll wait until you can get the legacy."

It was a wild scheme, but the sporting nature of the proposition fascinated the chauffeur. He pointed out that the roads out in the country might be pretty well choked up with snow and slush, but he said that he was willing to try to get his vehicle through.

High with hope, Fred and George bundled into the cab once more and started through the river-running streets.

"Don't put your arm around me!" admonished Undine, drawing away from the attentions of her *fiancé*. "You've been standing out in the rain, and you'll get me all wet."

"Seems to me you're pretty particular for a diving Venus! I've seen you take Freddy in your arms when he was all wet."

"That's different. If you want to hug somebody, you can have Freddy yourself. You know how fond he is of you. Have you got a fish for him in your overcoat-pocket?"

"I have not. This is a new coat, and I've reformed. No more fish! There is a certain smell about a coat that has been used as a hiding-place for cold-storage fish that makes the wearer conspicuous in good society. No perfume yet invented by man can quite distract the attention of the neighbors."

"Very well, Mr. Fitzgerald!"

"What's the idea, Mr. Fitzgerald? Ain't I your own little *Georgy Porgy* any more?"

"Don't mind me," murmured Fred indistinctly.

No one did.

"If you care more about your old coat than you do about me, why, go ahead—be a brute! What does it matter if poor, hungry little Freddy does starve? You don't care. All you think of is the way you're going to smell!"

She started to cry a little.

"For Heaven's sake, Flora, be reasonable," implored George. "Any man would feel the same way that I do about a brand-new English coat like this."

Flora Cora sniffed.

"If that's the same coat you had on this afternoon, it wouldn't hurt it any if it did smell a little of fish!"

"Hear, hear!" applauded Fred vigorously—without, however, gaining the attention of the combatants.

"I thought you said you liked this coat."

"I did say that, but I didn't know then that it was going to change your whole nature and make you a selfish brute, cruel to women and poor, starving animals!"

She sobbed in earnest now, and Freddy, who had been taught to do it as a stage trick, began to cry with her. Freddy was vociferous in his grief, and even in his case he was distinctly audible to the traffic policeman in a rubber poncho at the corner, who seriously thought of stopping the taxi and investigating the murder which was apparently being committed inside.

"Good night! If you feel that way about it, let me out!"

George made a move as if to leave the speeding taxi.

"Oh, you've got to go along," Fred protested. "You wouldn't leave me to go through with this thing alone?"

"I can't stand these constant slams at my character," George complained bitterly. "Just because I'm trying to keep my coat from smelling like a deep-sea fish-tug there's no reason why I should be called a brute. I won't listen to it! If you want me to go along, I'll ride outside."

"Do," encouraged Flora Cora with sudden enthusiasm. "You'll get lots of fresh air out there. It must be frightfully stuffy in here for a person so sensitive as you are."

"Oh, you think I won't do it, don't you?"

This with boyish rage from the disgruntled George. "Just to fool you, I will. This coat is water-proof, and I'll enjoy the fresh air."

George stopped the taxi and notified the driver of his intent to join him on the outside front seat. The driver politely emptied the pool of water which stood in the middle of the upholstered cushion by his side, and observed apologetically that he did not have a rubber lap-robe for outside passengers.

"That's all right," George assured him. "This overcoat of mine is water-proofed, and I sha'n't notice the dampness."

With George out, the interior of the cab really was much more comfortable. Fred, who had been perched uncomfortably on the seal's carrying-case, now took the place by Undine's side which George had vacated.

"George is so fond of fresh air!" observed the girl contemplatively. "How he is enjoying it!"

"I hope he is," Fred replied with much optimism.

"I think it's nicer in here, don't you?" suggested Undine. "I believe I'm actually getting sleepy."

"Are you comfortable?" A chivalrous and obvious question from Fred.

"I believe I could rest better if you'd put your arm in behind me and let me lay my head on your shoulder. I can hardly hold it up any longer. You don't mind, do you?"

"Not at all!"

Fred gallantly suited the action to the word. There was a momentary guilty thrill at finding his arm around the waist of a woman other than his wife, and at seeing a blond head on his shoulder, instead of Hyla's dark locks; but it passed when he remembered that this girl regarded him merely as a cushion to rest against. You couldn't read flirtatiousness into the simplicity of this innocent child of the stage.

When he arrived at that point of view, Fred promptly forgot all about his own Hyla and let himself drift into a contented consciousness of being very comfortable himself.

"It's funny," observed Undine, yawning, "that your name should be Freddy, just like my seal's! I'm very fond of Freddy, and I suppose that's why I like you. You don't mind if I call you Freddy, do you?"

"Not a bit, especially if I may call you Flora."

"Sure! That's my name. This is a—"

Whatever she was saying trailed off into a sleepy murmur. Her body relaxed and pressed closer to him. He shifted his arm a little, in order to hold her more securely, and smiled fatuously to himself, partly with pride to think that this girl trusted him so completely, and partly with unholy joy at discovering that he wasn't too old and too thoroughly married to have an electric interest in life. Only that afternoon he had been thinking that as far as he was concerned the enthusiasms of existence were a thing of the past.

These pleasant thoughts gradually became dreams as the swaying motion of the cab lulled him to sleep. Still with a smile on his face, he traversed an Arabian slumberland filled with delights devised only for him. It was a marvelous dream, and his arm tightened unconsciously about the sleeping form at his side.

In response the girl snuggled closer to him and murmured tenderly:

"Freddy!"

## VI

PRESENTLY, however, Fred Wetherill was shocked into alertness, and the Arabian houris of that pleasant slumberland suddenly vanished. The taxi door had been thrown open, and there in the doorway, oozing moisture, was George Fitzgerald.

"Are we here?" Fred questioned, his mind struggling to take up once more the mission of the evening.

"We are. It's only a little after midnight, and there are still lights burning at the house. Some one must be up. We're at the lodge-gates right now. There's no keeper here, so I had to get out and open them myself. I thought we'd better talk things over a bit before we went on."

"What do you want to talk over?" inquired Fred, who still retained a tight hold on his friend's *fiancée* with his encircling arm.

Undine, yawning, had replaced her head comfortably on his shoulder.

"You look wet, *Georgy Porgy*," she commented lazily.

"Look wet?" he retorted, ill-concealed indignation quivering in his voice. "If that's the best description you can give of my condition, I can't say much for your command of the English language. I'm

drowned, soaked, saturated, drenched, dripping. Wet! What a dry word to apply to me floating around in solution inside these clothes!"

"But I thought you said that that was a water-proof coat," suggested Fred.

"I wish I had the chap here that water-proofed it! I'll bet he's hiding in a trench somewhere in France where it's safe! This overcoat is just as water-proof as a piece of mosquito-netting."

"Oh, I'm sorry!" exclaimed Undine with ready sympathy. "But what a pity that you didn't take Freddy in your lap. He enjoys the water so!"

"Confound Freddy!" growled George. "Anyway, this is what I thought we had better discuss." He fixed Fred Wetherill with a businesslike and coldly dispassionate eye that dared him to go to sleep again. "Flora is your wife—that's all right, I suppose. The chauffeur is your chauffeur, and the pet seal is your pet seal; but who am I?"

"Is it a game?" Fred responded pleasantly. "I'll bite—who are you?"

"No, no!"

"Oh, do I have to guess? Then I guess you are the pussy that was thrown in the well. It's your turn to guess next, Miss Kelly."

"Am I going to stand out here all night to furnish comedy inspiration for you to make jokes about?" George protested.

"Of course not," Fred replied soothingly. "I won't make another joke. I can't think of anything bright to say now, anyway."

"Why qualify that remark with 'now'?" George retorted sarcastically. "What I want to know is, what are you going to tell your uncle that I am?"

"You might just be my friend."

"Of course, but there's no imagination about that. I really am your friend—or I was up to a short time ago. Besides, you wouldn't be apt to bring a friend with you on a visit to see a dying relative, would you?"

"No, I suppose not."

"Whom would you naturally bring?"

"An undertaker," Undine suggested practically.

"No, no, Flora! You don't get the idea."

"You asked for suggestions," the girl pouted.

"Yes, of course, dear. I understand. Don't cry on that boob's shoulder."

"I'm not a boob," returned Fred, "and you can cry on my shoulder all you wish. It isn't water-proof, either."

"Oh, darn it!" ejaculated the dripping Fitzgerald, taking off his water-logged derby and hurling it as far as he could into the night. This seemed to relieve his feelings, for he turned back to them with a grin. "I've got it! I'll be your personal servant. That will account for me all right, and as your man I can be near you all the time to help you out. Drive on, *cocher*! The plot is laid." This to the chauffeur.

George made the rest of the journey up the drive standing on the running-board, with the rain falling in a torrent on his unprotected head. Whenever Fred looked out through the rain-sheeted side window, his friend's angry eyes met his in a significant stare.

## VII

WHEN the car drew up under the *porte-cochère*, a sedate and noiseless butler opened the door for the visitors.

"The garage is at the end of the drive," he instructed the chauffeur. The butler seemed to know Fred. "This way, Mr. Wetherill. I'll have one of the men bring in your baggage."

"We're going to return in an hour or so," said Fred.

"Oh, no, sir! Mr. Dodd expects you to stay some time."

"I want my baggage, anyway," supplied Undine. "You don't think I'd leave little Freddy out there in the garage alone, do you?"

"All right, then," Fred acquiesced, turning to the butler. "I'll have my own man bring in the baggage. Blithers"—this to George—"take the bag to Mrs. Wetherill's room, and then you may find a place where you can dry your clothes."

"Yes, sir."

There seemed to be no hitch in the proceedings thus far. Late as it was, the visitors were evidently expected, and Flora Cora Kelly got by the butler without suspicion. Fred mentally commended her ability to make the situation plausible.

"And, Blithers," she was saying to her dripping *fiancé*, "handle that case very carefully, please."

"Yes, madam, Hi will."

"What do you mean, 'Hi will'?" Fred

demanded in a fierce whisper, as he dropped back to George's side.

"Confound you, you named me Blithers, and I'm trying to live up to it! Blithers!" he growled. "Blithers! Of all the names in the world you had to select that!"

"It's a good name," declared Fred. "George Washington Blithers—people would vote for a man with a name like that."

They were shown to a large bedroom with two comfortable dressing-rooms adjoining. The dressing-rooms were connected by a large tiled bath, with a sunken plunge supplied with constantly running water.

"Isn't it lovely?" Flora exclaimed, going from one room to the other, exploring like a cat in a strange house. "I never saw such a beautiful bath. Why, you can swim in this tub!"

"Is there only one bed?" Fred asked the butler, who was waiting patiently for any suggestions concerning their needs.

"Yes, sir—one, sir. In the summer-time there is a bed out on the sleeping-porch, through this door, but we haven't set it up yet, sir, and the housekeeper thought that you being so recently married and all that—you understand, sir." He coughed apologetically behind his hand.

"Yes, yes, of course," Fred assured him, "I understand!"

Then he assured himself that it would be all right, as they expected to return to the city as soon as they had seen the dying uncle.

George entered, puffing over the weight of the box, which he had been allowed to carry up-stairs unaided.

"Put it here, Mr. Blithers," suggested the butler, indicating a luggage-rack beside the bed. "And don't stand around dripping on the rugs, my man! Go down-stairs to the servants' sitting-room at once, and stand over a register until I can see about drying your clothes."

"Shall I go, sir?" George questioned of Fred, and then added under his breath fiercely: "Say no, confound you, say no!"

Had he been watching closely, the majestic butler would have seen Blithers kick his master sharply on the shins.

"Not just yet, Blithers," Fred responded suavely. "I shall want you for a few moments. That will be all, Hawkins. I'll send Blithers to find you in a short time."

"Very well, sir!"

Hawkins withdrew, looking significantly at the puddles on the floor which marked each place where George Fitzgerald had rested a foot for more than a second or two at a time.

"You ought not to stand around, George," declared Flora Cora, withdrawing her attention from the splendor of her surroundings to her sodden *fiancé*. "You'll catch your death of cold if you keep those wet clothes on any longer."

"Oh!" replied George, with a slight sneer in his voice. "You want to send me away, do you—so that you can be alone with this gay *roué*, this heart-breaker?"

"Why, nothing of the sort, dear! I was thinking only of your health. You can't go around all night with those dripping garments on."

"All night! We aren't going to stay here all night!"

"Maybe you're not, but I certainly refuse to take that long drive back to the city without a good rest. I'm too sleepy. And look at that bed—isn't it the most snuzzly-looking piece of furniture you ever put your eyes on? It makes me yawn every time I glance in that direction. Believe me, there's nothing waiting for me at the hotel that could make me break my date with that mattress!"

"But, good Heavens, Flora darling, you can't do that, you know! Where would the rest of us sleep?"

"Why, I hadn't thought. Freddy can sleep in the bath-tub—my seal, I mean," she flung over her shoulder apologetically at her temporary bridegroom; "and I suppose you will get a cot down in the servants' quarters—"

"Huh!" George interrupted. "Pretty soft for me, I guess—a cot in the servants' quarters! For all you care, it probably doesn't make any difference if I sleep on the floor in the stable!"

"Don't be unreasonable, George. It was your own suggestion that you should be Blithers, Mr. Wetherill's valet."

"I never thought of the Blithers part of it!" growled George. "That bright gleam of intelligence came to Mr. Wetherill. If I had known about that, and this idea of yours that I should grab off a good night's rest sleeping on a rock-pile somewhere, I'd have stopped at a drug-store on the way out and bought myself a flask of cyanid of potassium



to pass around among my friends." He stopped suddenly. "Where, according to your scheme, was that tower of honor, that shining light of wisdom in a dark world, Mr. Frederick Wetherill, going to rest the uneasy dome of thought that graces his shoulders? Where was that parlor python going to sleep?"

"Why," faltered the diving Venus, "I hadn't thought."

"I guess not, but I have. This is supposed to be his room, too, you know, as well as yours. It has never occurred to you, of course, but married people, or people who are supposed to be married, are often assigned to the same quarters. Huh! You hadn't thought of it, maybe, but the old Cheshire cat over here had! Well, I'm going to fool you both. If we stay here overnight I'm going to sleep up here, too. That's the kind of a devoted servant I'm going to be—never going to lose sight of my master. Night and day I'll be within call, ready to tie his ties, or polish his shoes, or give him a black eye—whatever is necessary!"

"How unpleasant is it possible for you to be?" Flora demanded with dignity. "I'm glad I discovered about you before we were actually married. Here is your ring. If I'm such a disgrace, I'm sure you don't want to have me wearing anything that could possibly link my tarnished name with your pure, unblemished one!"

She handed him a solitaire, which she had withdrawn from her engagement finger during her impassioned third-act speech. George took it wonderingly. A most disconsolate look crossed his features, and he sank upon both knees.

"Listen, Flora darling! I didn't mean what I said."

"But you said it, and if my wearing your ring gives you the privilege of speaking to me like that, I'm through!"

"It doesn't; I apologize. Here, step on my neck, adored one! Look, I bump my head on the hardwood floor. Forgive me, and let me wish this ring back on your finger with a kiss!"

To tell the honest truth, George did not look like a pleasant object to kiss. He was too damp. The dye from his necktie had penetrated the limp and soggy collar which clung to his neck until he looked like something rescued from the ash-can by a not very particular cat.

"Ah!"

It was drawled, but the exclamation was none the less one of surprise. It froze the attention of the occupants of the room and focused it upon the person who had just entered and stood in the doorway.

He was tall and thin, and wore an English-cut frock coat that accentuated his slimness. His chin was raised, and so was his nose, as if he were a hunting-dog sniffing the air. On his upper lip a very sparse but accurately waxed mustache twitched slightly. You've seen a cat do the same thing. This mustache and his eyebrows were quite brunette. His hair was several shades lighter, and was rather discouraged by the discipline that trained it so accurately on both sides of a correctly centered middle part.

"I am Mr. Vogt, Mr. Dodd's secretary," he announced impressively. "Your door stood partially open, or I should have knocked."

#### VIII

Mr. VOGT seemed embarrassed at the scene into which he had projected himself. He gazed apologetically from one to the other of the group. Fred Wetherill saved the situation.

"When you have finished fastening Mrs. Wetherill's shoe, you may go, Blithers," he said.

As Flora Cora Kelly was not wearing shoes, but only pumps, which slipped on without fastening in any way, shape, or manner, this order might have seemed a trifle superfluous to a careful observer. But apparently Mr. Vogt was not a close observer. He looked at the lady's eyes, not her feet.

George, *alias* Blithers, knelt for an instant longer at his sweetheart's feet, and then, seeing no sign of relenting in her eyes, he got up slowly and dropped the diamond ring into his drenched vest-pocket. His fingers there encountered a sodden mess of paper pulp, which he extracted wonderingly. It was his pocket copy of the "Compendium of Marriage." He dropped it into the wastebasket as he went out.

"Blithers!" Fred halted him at the door. "You threw away your book of rules."

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"There aren't any rules to account for

what they'll do, sir," he observed mournfully, nodding his head almost imperceptibly in the direction of the only woman in the room. "Thank you, sir!"

He withdrew, and walked moistly down the hall outside. Fred thoughtfully fished the little book out of the waste-basket and put it into his pocket for future reference.

"Now, Mr. Vogt," he said pleasantly, turning his inquiring attention to the secretary, "what can Mrs. Wetherill and myself do for you?"

The secretary acknowledged the quasi-introduction to the lady by a stiff bow from the waist—a sort of a Lawrence D'Orsay obeisance. It dawned upon Fred, when he saw it, that Vogt fancied he resembled the English actor.

"I thought," said the young man, moving into the room, "that possibly, before you met your uncle, you ought to be in possession of the facts of his recent illness, so that you could more easily direct your conversation in channels which would not displease him."

"Yes," acknowledged Fred, "I think that would be wise. Uncle Cato and myself have never been particularly intimate, although he has done a great deal for me in a sort of surreptitious way. He is dying?"

The secretary looked embarrassed.

"He says he is."

"H-m! What does his physician say?"

"He refuses to have medical attention. Yesterday he discharged Dr. Hermann, who has attended him for years, because he told Mr. Dodd there was nothing the matter with him."

"I see!" But at that Fred did not see very clearly. "I'm glad that we had this opportunity for discussion. Just what does my uncle claim that his malady is?"

"Gout and a broken heart."

This statement from the private secretary was echoed by a peal of merry laughter from Undine, which trailed away suddenly when she saw that Mr. Vogt's expression of dignity had not melted.

"Perhaps I had better explain," he suggested.

"Please do."

The secretary cleared his throat uneasily. His sense of his own importance had been sadly ruffled by the sudden laughter of the beautiful girl whom he was meeting for the first time as the wife of another man. First

her smile had captured his heart, and now her laugh had smothered it.

"Your uncle has always had what he wanted, from food and drink to wives. You know, of course, that his last marriage was his fourth?"

"Yes." Fred inclined his head in acknowledgment.

"But you have not met the last Mrs. Dodd, I believe?"

"No, not yet."

"There is little chance of your meeting her in the future, I fear."

"A reconciliation is hopeless?"

"Absolutely."

"The cause of the trouble was—"

"Several things. Mrs. Dodd is one of the vice-presidents of the National Prohibition Association."

"Ah, yes!"

"But that was not all. It was a source of constant argument to them that Mr. Dodd drank occasionally—you know he has never been really intemperate—but that might have been successfully bridged over except for Mrs. Dodd's convictions in the matter of art."

"I don't quite see."

"You will. You remember the trade-mark picture that appears on the label of Dodd's Malt Whisky?"

"Rather!" replied Frederick, with warm enthusiasm. "There's a large copy of it, framed, in almost every barroom in the country."

"Possibly Mrs. Wetherill is not as familiar with the picture as you are," Mr. Vogt pointed out, with what, in any one but a secretary, might have been sarcasm. "For her benefit I will mention that the trade-mark is a copy of a painting by Svenjorgenson, called 'After the Bath.' It is a rather beautiful nude of the old school, and represents a young woman just stepping out of a sunken tiled bath. Svenjorgenson painted it ten years ago, before he was famous. Originally the girl was just in the act of reaching for a towel which lay on a marble seat. The picture was shown at various exhibitions, but for some reason or other it did not sell until Mr. Dodd happened to see it. It caught his fancy, and he made an offer for it, stipulating that certain changes should be made in it. The price he offered was too much for the artist's scruples, and Svenjorgenson fell. The towel

was painted out, and in its place appeared a tray containing a glass and a bottle bearing the name of Mr. Dodd's product. To the title 'After the Bath' was added another line, 'Drink Dodd's Malt Whisky.'

The secretary paused impressively.

"I think I have seen it," Flora admitted in the interval.

"It was a desecration, but it pleased Mr. Dodd immensely. The original of the painting has always hung in his house. It is a large canvas, and naturally it is much more beautiful than the lithographed reproductions you have seen. I have often stood before it myself, absolutely spellbound by the grace and charm of that girl."

"You think she is beautiful?" queried Flora.

"I never hope to meet her like in this life," murmured Vogt reverently. "I think it is my fondness for that picture which has influenced Mr. Dodd to keep me in his employ as long as he has. I am really a wretched secretary, and I'd much rather write poetry than typewrite letters, but when he gets too exasperated with me I let fall some remark about the beauty of his trademark, and he invariably forgives me—or, at least, he has so far."

"But how does all this bear upon my uncle's domestic infelicities?" Fred interrupted impatiently.

"I was getting to that." Vogt was evidently a man who could not be hurried, and Fred Wetherill could easily imagine how the man's slowness would irritate his irascible uncle, whose schooling had been in the modern get-rich-quick methods of snap and dash. "The picture hung in the ballroom of this building. As you know, the entire third floor is one immense room, and its largest wall-space was chiefly occupied by 'After the Bath.' It was undoubtedly the most conspicuous thing in the house. Nearly every one in the United States who reads the Sunday newspapers knew about that picture; but the present Mrs. Dodd had never heard of it, or, if she had, she had forgotten it. Mr. Dodd courted her in Europe. That was before the present war broke out."

"Perhaps it was what caused the war," suggested Fred, but no one noticed the interruption.

"She was interested in art, too, but in art of quite a different sort from the simple things that pleased my employer," Vogt went

on. "She was ultramodern, futurist, and they had many pleasant arguments about relative merits. Of course, Mr. Dodd was usually beaten in any such discussion, because he belongs to the numerous cult of those who 'don't know a thing about art, but know what they like.' She was twenty years younger than Mr. Dodd, who is now nearing fifty. At first he regarded her opinions as the airy chaff of youth; but when he had married her and brought her to this place to live, he discovered that some of her ideas were anchored in solid rock. That immense canvas in the ballroom struck her in the face the first time she ever saw it, and from that moment her fingers itched to tear it from its honored position. She wheedled, argued, pleaded, stormed, and browbeat the poor old man, trying to induce him to have it removed. She said that besides being bad art it humiliated her, a prominent member of various Prohibition societies, to have to receive her friends beneath a picture that was known wherever liquor was sold.

"Mr. Dodd was firm, however. They quarreled and bickered to no avail until one week, while Mr. Dodd was away from home, his wife had the offending painting removed. In its place she had a large mural fresco executed by Chapman Saint Gawkins, the wildest of the futurists. The new decoration not only filled all the wall formerly occupied by 'After the Bath,' but it also lapped over onto the other walls of the room. I can't describe the effect. It looks a good deal like the inside of a kaleidoscope gone mad. Your uncle, on his return, demanded that the old picture should be replaced at once. His wife refused. In a fit of anger Mr. Dodd threw a bucket of red barn-paint into the middle of the new picture. No one could tell where it struck except Mrs. Dodd, but she pretended that he had ruined the whole composition. The upshot of the whole matter was that she left the house, vowing never to return. He saw her to the door and hoped out loud that he would never see another futurist decoration of any sort. Either the original painting of 'After the Bath' went with Mrs. Dodd, or else she destroyed it, because it has never turned up, although we have searched the house from top to bottom.

"Mr. Dodd has mourned the loss of the picture and his wife very deeply. I think

he loved both of them sincerely, and he is too old a man to rebound buoyantly from his sorrows. The last straw was when Mrs. Dodd started building a futurist house just up the valley, on a piece of land her husband had given her. It was right where he couldn't help seeing it out of his bedroom windows the moment he got up. Of course, he moved to the other side of the house, but he knows that that dreadful, seasick-looking building is there, and every once in a while I catch him pulling aside the curtains—which are always kept down in that direction in order to shut out the view—and peering disconsolately at the striped horror which he knows shelters his wife. Her ingratitude broke his heart. He has been failing ever since. That's why he sent for you."

"Where is the futurist painting now?" Flora inquired at the conclusion of the secretary's narrative.

"It is still on the walls of the ballroom up-stairs. On the grounds that she paid for the painting personally, Mrs. Dodd has an injunction out, restraining him from touching it further. On his side, Mr. Dodd has secured a court order instructing her to remove it before the end of the month. I think she is leaving it there until the last minute because she knows how much it annoys him."

### IX

Mr. Vogt invited the visitors to follow him to Mr. Dodd's quarters. As they were leaving the room their attention was arrested by a series of short, sharp yelps from the carrying-case.

"Good Heavens, what is that?" Vogt exclaimed in a nervous panic.

"It's Freddy." Flora nodded toward the box. "He wants to get out."

"I didn't know you had a dog with you!"

Neither Mr. Wetherill nor his pretty pseudo-wife bothered to explain that Freddy was not a dog.

"Wait for me outside," Flora suggested. "I'll let him out, and lock the door on him, so that he can play around while we're away."

She joined them in a moment, and together they proceeded down the hall to the portion of the house occupied by Mr. Dodd. It was in a remote wing over the servants' quarters—as far as possible, Mr. Vogt ex-

plained, from the exasperating view of Mrs. Dodd's futurist residence up the valley.

Cato Dodd was waiting for them in his sitting-room, which was a conventional enough sort of a chamber, except that on the walls, instead of the usual paintings of persons and landscapes, there were various-sized framed reproductions of the famous "After the Bath" picture. The room seemed peopled with young ladies of unmistakably cleanly habits.

The carefully constructed picture of his uncle as an emaciated invalid which Fred Wetherill had conjured up, in order to arouse proper sympathy in himself when he should greet the sufferer, had to be destroyed hastily, and another impression pushed into its place in motion-picture tempo. Cato Dodd was not emaciated. His face would have passed acceptably for a full moon, and his body seemed to have been constructed for the express purpose of being shaken violently by gusts of hearty laughter. His head was bald, not with the honest kind of baldness that admits it and pretends to be a badge of intellect, but clandestinely bald with a few lonely wisps carefully trained across the bare Sahara—the kind of a head that is meat for every hair-restorer quack in the world.

But the face that should have been laughing was somber with grief. It was a face that wished to be pleasant, but which had given up the struggle when overwhelmed with trouble.

Mr. Dodd was seated beside a table containing a large glass aquarium full of goldfish, and a bandaged foot extended gracefully on a hassock in front of him. Without any effort at all you could imagine him singing "I Want What I Want When I Want It," and smashing his fist down on the table in time to Victor Herbert's music.

"Come forward, my boy," said the plump veteran in a mournfully subdued voice. "Come forward and greet your poor, dying uncle!"

Fred stepped closer into the circle of light shed by the table-lamp at his uncle's elbow, and greeted the older man cheerfully, as one is supposed to address invalids.

"But you're not dying, Uncle Cato! You look remarkably well."

"I am dying," Mr. Dodd rapped out sharply, slapping the arm of his chair with



the palm of his hand, "and I look like death already. There's no use trying to cheer me up." He finished his speech with a groan.

"Yes, sir," the young man admitted, not sure what sentiment he was subscribing to.

"I guess I ought to know how I feel, and I feel as if I was dying. My heart hardly beats at all any more." There was almost a ring of pride in his voice. "A woman did it, my boy, and I hope she's proud of her job! When she comes to look at my lifeless form in the casket, she may have a pang of regret to think that her actions put me there, but I doubt it. Lovely woman, Mrs. Dodd, but no soul, no heart—cruel as a demon, Fred! Broke my spirit, she did. Made me the dying wreck that you see. She's getting a divorce, but I'm going to spite her. I'm going to die before she gets it, and she'll have to go into mourning for me!"

He ruminated cheerfully on the gloomy future. Then he sighed.

"Is that your wife, Fred? Step forward, young woman. I can't see you very well with my fading vision."

Flora Cora Kelly came forward and stood for inspection about six inches to starboard of his bandaged foot.

"By George!" exclaimed Cato Dodd sibilantly, and then repeated himself. "By George, you're a pretty girl!"

Flora was undeniably all that he said. The free and almost insolent pose of her, as she stood unembarrassed by the sharp scrutiny to which she was subjected! The slow, good-humored smile that brought out her visible dimples as she acknowledged the old man's tribute, and the beautiful symmetry that revealed itself in the roundness of her cheek, her bosom, and the graceful line of her back! The simple yet daring cut of the black velvet gown that hung like a royal robe from her pink and white shoulders! Fred glowed with the conscious pride of possession, and then chilled somewhat as he realized that she was his only temporarily.

"There's something about you that is strangely familiar," Mr. Dodd went on ruminatively; "something I can't place. What is it, Vogt?"

"I had noticed it, too, sir," the secretary admitted slowly, "but I can't say what it is. I'm quite sure that I never saw Mrs. Wetherill before, or any woman one-half so beautiful."

Flora Cora turned on him her most dazzling smile.

"You'll spoil me," she complained with mock reproof.

"He won't while I live," amended Uncle Cato. "I'll attend to that myself." Then he groaned suddenly and changed to a melancholy tone. "I had forgotten for a moment how short a span I had to live!"

The girl sank gracefully at the old man's feet—or foot, rather, because the other one was so bandaged up as to be scarcely recognizable as such. She knew that she was a picture there on the floor in the attitude of a child. Every one else in the room admitted it privately to himself with a swift intake of breath.

To complete the conquest of Uncle Cato, she took his hand in hers and stroked it gently.

"Those are beautiful goldfish," she observed dreamily, watching the lively little inhabitants of the glass bowl.

"Aren't they?" Cato Dodd replied. "I'm very fond of them. Some of the ones I have are quite rare and valuable specimens. One—that greenish-gold one—is called Midas, and he allows me to touch him with my forefinger under water. He's a great pet!"

"I shall love them, too," murmured Flora, "because you do."

"Fred," his uncle said in a voice full of thrilling emotion, "I don't see how you ever persuaded this lovely girl to marry you! I never thought you were very clever. Tell me, my child, are you happy with Fred?"

"We have never had a cross word," Flora Cora replied softly and truthfully.

"If the scoundrel ever makes you unhappy, I'll haunt him!" declared his uncle, glaring at Fred as a sort of preliminary warning of what he might expect to see in the dark watches of the night. Then, softening his tone, he turned back to her.

"What was your father's name?"

"Seumas Kelly."

"Kelly?"

"He's one of the Virginia Kellys," interposed Fred hastily. "Ex-Senator and—"

"I did not ask you," his uncle stated coldly, freezing in mid career the young man's rapid explanatory speech. "Allow me to question your wife without further interruption!"

Fred Wetherill turned away with a murmured:

"Heaven give her a lying tongue, then!" Uncle Cato went on with his questions. "You have no children yet, I suppose?" "Oh, yes!" she answered brightly. "Three!"

"Three!" It was a horror-stricken exclamation that was echoed faintly by the private secretary. "But you've only been married seven months!"

Confronted by this embarrassing fact, Flora gulped and retracted.

"We adopted them," she explained.

Fred took a hasty breath of fresh air to replace the lungful he had been holding, and brushed his hand nervously across his face.

"What are their names?" inquired Uncle Cato.

"One, the oldest, we call Cato," she cooed. "He's a boy. The other two are girls, and—"

What she might have said was interrupted by a prolonged and vigorous disturbance down-stairs somewhere.

"This is very annoying," complained the master of the house, "very annoying indeed! Go, Vogt, and see what can possibly be the matter."

The secretary made a noiseless exit, while the older man patted the girl's hand absently. Apparently the eruption below stairs had knocked several perfectly good questions out of his mind, and he was endeavoring to recall what they were talking about.

"Never mind!" He gave up the effort of memory. "Whatever happens, my dear, you can always find a home with your Uncle Cato, or at least you could if I expected to live."

"You're going to!" She pressed her cheek against his hand.

"I am not! Well, perhaps I will," he said, relenting. "There's something about you that—"

Enter Mr. Vogt, slightly flustered.

"There's a woman down at the door who insists on seeing you to-night. Says you sent for her. Do you know anything about it? Hawkins has already told her that it is too late for visitors, and that you are not well, but she insists that you know who she is and all about her visit."

"I don't, though," replied Uncle Cato. "I sent for no one except Mr. and Mrs. Wetherill, and they are here. Tell her that for me."

Mr. Vogt made an exit once more. Si-

multaneously a bell in the room tinkled unobtrusively.

"Will you answer that, Fred?" Uncle Cato requested. "It's the house telephone. The receiver is there on the wall, by the door."

Fred followed directions and took up the instrument.

"Hello!" he said.

"I want to speak to Mr. Wetherill," said a man's voice.

"This is Mr. Wetherill," Fred admitted pleasantly, wondering what any of the servants could have to say to him.

"This is the chauffeur."

"Yes!"

"I wondered if you knew how much your taxicab bill was."

"No."

"It's forty-four dollars now."

"Interesting, if true!"

"If you'll pay it, I thought I'd beat it back to the city."

"I can't do that, you know."

"What'll I do? Either I get my money or I'll start something."

"Everything will be all right. All you have to do is wait."

"At ten dollars an hour?"

"Yes."

"All right!"

The voice was a little dubious, but the receiver was hung up. While Fred had been speaking, Hawkins, the butler, had entered the room and now stood respectfully at young Wetherill's elbow.

"What is it, Hawkins?" Fred asked when he noticed him.

"Your man, Blithers, wished to ask you to give him your attention at the earliest opportunity. He has something of importance which he wishes to communicate."

"Oh, all right! Where is he?"

"Just outside."

Hawkins nodded significantly toward the door which communicated with the hall. Fred gave a hasty glance in the direction of Uncle Cato and Flora, and discovered that they were so much wrapped up in each other that they were quite oblivious of his presence. Therefore he left the room, to find his old friend George Fitzgerald waiting for him in the hall.

It was George, and yet it was not George. Possibly the soul of George inhabited that outer shell, but even that is doubtful. If

"clothes make the man," it was not George at all, but a very unhappy footman in livery.

"I never knew before that you were knock-kneed," was Fred's first comment as he surveyed the get-up in which he found his friend.

"Never mind my legs," the aforesaid friend rejoined sourly. "I had to wear these clothes or else go to bed, and I didn't care to go to bed—not by a long shot!"

"Why not, old man? Can't you sleep?"

"I can't, and what's more, I don't intend to until I've got this whole immoral party safely back to Broadway and Forty-Second Street, where people are respectable and have some sense of right and wrong!"

"Now, look here, George," Fred returned in as soothing a tone as possible, "this was your scheme, and you mustn't spoil it just when it is working so nicely. I'm the one that has to suffer, and I'm willing to stand it."

"You're the one who has to suffer?" George sneered. "Ye gods! What are you suffering about? All you do is hang around my girl and pretend she's your wife. You're having a deuce of a hard time. I don't see how you stand it!"

"You forget," Fred reminded him with dignity, "that this is the first night I ever spent away from my wife since we were married. I don't even know where she is, or what may be happening to her. You've no idea how I suffer!"

"Hah!" A loud exclamation of derision escaped George's lips. "You want to see your wife, I suppose! Hah!"

"I do," his friend assured him. "I wish that she were here. I listen with strained ears to everything that girl of yours says, for fear she will make some break that will queer everything."

"Oh, Fred!" It was the voice of the moribund uncle.

"Yes, sir."

"Come in here!"

Excusing himself to his man servant, who stood by hungrily for a glimpse through the door of the angel he hoped to make his wife, Fred returned to the sitting-room.

"Flora has just been telling me what an ardent lover you are. Gad, how I envy you, you young dog! She says she's getting sleepy, so you can take her off to bed. In order to talk to her I guess I'll live until

to-morrow, anyway. Come, Flora, kiss your poor old uncle good night."

Flora was quite equal to the occasion, and pressed her lips dutifully to the broad forehead of Mr. Dodd, who sighed regretfully when he saw where she had aimed.

"You're right," he said, by way of palliating his regret. "Never kiss any one on the lips but your husband. Gad, it does me good to see any one so happily married! You two are just ideally suited to each other. Kiss your wife, Fred, for me, will you?"

"Now?"

"Yes."

"Very well." Fred opened his arms with resignation. "Come, Flora."

Flora slipped into the embrace as a gull lights on a bowsprit. There was no perceptible movement; she hovered a moment, and then her soft lips, slightly parted, were pressed to his.

It was not a bad moment at all. Indeed, its brief duration was what annoyed Fred most. One second his lips were pressed to Flora's, and the next he was spinning through the air, trying to regain his balance.

In the place where he had stood was Blithers, his countenance a kaleidoscope of scowls and pleading—scowls for Fred and pleading for Flora.

"Monster!" he yelled at Fred. To Flora he said entreatingly: "I couldn't stand it, dear, to see you kiss him!" He had dropped his English accent temporarily, but in the excitement no one noticed it.

"What is the meaning of this ridiculous scene? Who is this man?" Uncle Cato demanded, rising to his feet—including his game one.

"It's my man, Blithers."

"Blithers! Blithers!" the elderly man repeated. "Oh, my foot!" he screamed, as he sank back into his chair. "Do I have to suffer the tortures of the infernal regions for a man named Blithers?"

"See what you've done, Blithers!" Flora reproached him. "You've deliberately made Mr. Dodd hurt his foot. Just for that we'll take a dollar out of your wages this month."

"A dollar!" yelled Mr. Dodd. "A dollar! My foot hurts worse than a thousand dollars' worth!"

"He makes so many mistakes, and we have to fine him so often, that I don't think

he has more than a dollar coming," Flora explained soothingly to Uncle Cato. "He doesn't understand very well. That's why we call him Blithers."

"He's stupid, is he?" growled the millionaire. "Well, why do you have an imbecile like that around?"

Flora's eyes filled slowly with tears.

"Oh, Uncle Cato, how can you reproach us with that? You know we can't afford good servants—not on the salary Fred gets."

The old man's scowls softened at once.

"I had forgotten. That will all be remedied. You shall have ample money. Fred, discharge this man at once! I consider him a dangerous character, and I should not care to have him remain overnight in the house. He has a villainous look. I should not be surprised to learn that he is an escaped convict. You have to be very careful about your servants these days."

"I'll attend to it," promised Fred dutifully. "I'll pay him his wages and fire him this evening."

"If you do," muttered Blithers, *née* Fitzgerald, "I'll blow the whole game, and make a mud pie out of your features besides!"

Of a sudden the uproar down-stairs recommenced. At first there was a subdued murmur, then a couple of distant yells were heard, and finally the clatter of feet on the stairway.

"Help!" cried a voice.

"Stop her! Stop thief!" cried others.

Instinctively Flora stepped, not toward Fred, but toward Blithers for protection. With a sigh of content, that worthy put his arm about her waist and turned to face cheerfully whatever might befall.

It befell rapidly. The door was flung open. A young woman stood in the opening for an instant, surveying the scene, and then dashed unerringly to Fred Wetherill's side and draped herself around him like a wistaria-vine.

"Oh, Fred!" she babbled. "I had such a dreadful time getting here. The maid didn't give me the telegram until almost train-time, and I dashed to the station, and then there was a washout, and—"

"There she is!"

With this "view-haloo," the pack of servants, headed by Mr. Vogt, burst into the room.

Mr. Dodd pounded loudly on the table in an exasperated effort to make himself heard,

and then inadvertently stamped his foot with impatience. The yell he let out as a result immediately silenced all competition.

"Quiet!" he shouted, tears of pain running down his cheeks. "What has happened? Who let that woman in here? What do you mean, Fred, by putting your arms around her right before your wife's very eyes? What are you thinking of? Come to me, Flora!"

He held out an arm to the diving Venus, who had discreetly disengaged Blithers's protecting wing. Flora obeyed docilely.

"How can you," went on the old man, "with an innocent, trusting wife like this, carry on so with other women? To think that she knows your plans so well that she followed you here! Look at the two! Here is truth, innocence, and loving trust; there are lies, self-interest, and deceit. How can you hesitate? If you are any relation of mine, tell that creature to be gone and never to come between you and your mate again!"

"Fred!" His name was uttered entreatingly by both women at once.

The young man reached up and ruffled his hair in distraction. Uncle Cato liked Flora, was evidently infatuated with her. It was doubtful if he would care as much for Hyla, and quite certain that he would be enraged beyond forgiveness at the trick which had been played on him.

There seemed only one thing to do. Fred held out his arms to the beautiful Flora, and she, with a cry of delight, ran to him.

Hyla stood looking with incredulous eyes that swam mistily for a moment with heart-broken tears. Then she swayed and would have fallen to the floor, had not the strong left arm of Blithers supported her when she fainted. His unoccupied fist was clenched and shaking threateningly in the direction of his employer.

X

"SILENCE!" roared Uncle Cato, although the hush of the tomb already prevailed in the room, for no one had as yet recovered from his astonishment. "Who is this strange woman? Do you recognize her, Fred?"

Fred gulped.

"Yes, she is"—he paused for more air—"she is Blithers's wife."

"Ah!" came a groan from Blithers. It sounded as if some one had hit him in the



stomach. In the exclamation were mingled anger, regret, mortification, reproach, and despair.

"She is Mrs. Blithers, you say, and yet I saw her in your arms. You shameless hypocrite, I can't see how you came to be born into my family, Fred! Blithers, I take back what I said about you. This man has wronged you, and you have my permission to take whatever satisfaction you can get. To think that a man with such a lovely creature for a wife as Mrs. Wetherill should disgrace himself by philandering with the wife of a servant is beyond me. It isn't as if your wife were so very beautiful, Blithers. She's pretty, of course, but there's no comparison between the two women."

At that moment it was true, but a comparison under existing conditions was hardly fair to Hyla. She was wearing a wrinkled and damp tailored suit, while Flora was garbed in an evening gown that was a creation. Hyla had a dragged hat perched over one ear, pulling her coiffure all awry, while Flora's blond locks were secure in the permanent marcel she had to use for her professional work. Hyla was in a limp faint, with white lips and cheeks; Flora, needless to say, wore the flush of perfect health.

"I think," said Fred with a burst of inspiration, "that it will be best if we all go home and straighten things out."

"Oh, it's so late!" protested Flora.

"I'm afraid I shall have to insist," Fred continued evenly.

"Yes, let's go home," Blithers urged.

Hyla began to show fluttering signs of life.

"Put her on that couch over there, Blithers, and let me rub her wrists," counseled Flora, whose womanly sympathy was aroused by the pitiable spectacle of Hyla's condition.

"And when you've finished," ordered Fred, "find the chauffeur and tell him we'll start back in ten minutes."

"All right!" agreed Blithers with a lack of respect that shocked the punctilious Hawkins, who stood by helplessly watching the tide of events stream by him.

But Blithers was destined never to deliver that message to the chauffeur.

While Flora bent anxiously over the reclining form of the woman whose place she had temporarily usurped, another figure burst breathless into the room. Perhaps it

is a slight exaggeration to say "breathless," for the newcomer was able to speak, but the torrent of language which poured from his lips was foreign to the understanding of his hearers. He got the center of the stage, all right, at that.

He was a fair-haired giant with a walrus mustache and a pair of wide, soft, blue eyes that any baby would have been proud of. In a peasant's smock he would have been picturesque. In overalls and boots he was merely clumsy.

"Who is it?" demanded the aged master of the house, shouting imperiously above the tumult of language.

"It's Augustus Johnson, sir," volunteered Hawkins. "He's a Swede, and don't speak much English. He has a small farm up the valley, sir. He walks out with Nora, the cook."

"What's he doing up here?" Mr. Dodd went on petulantly. "My private sitting-room is no place for the servants to have their rows! You know how nervous I am."

Hawkins took Augustus by the arm and attempted to lead him, still spilling language, from the room. Augustus balked and began to make excited motions with his hands.

"Dam, dam!" he spluttered.

"Sh!" admonished Hawkins, looking apprehensively over his shoulder. "There are ladies here."

"Dam—" Augustus repeated, to be promptly shut off by a hand placed over his mouth by the butler.

"Wait!" requested Fred. "That boy is trying to tell us something important. Let me talk to him."

That seemed to be the general consensus of opinion, and nearly every one crowded around the young Swedish farmer.

"Now, remove the gag, and let's hear this record again," Fred commanded.

The butler took off the muffing palm, and immediately there came forth loud and clear the words:

"Dam bust!"

Augustus paused.

"Damn—bust," repeated Fred uncomprehendingly. "I use both those words myself sometimes, but I don't get the fellow's meaning."

"Dam bust!" repeated Augustus, still greatly excited.

"I've got it!" cried Fred. "He's trying to tell us that the dam in the river has

broken, or is breaking. He's warning us of a flood."

Augustus nodded his head excitedly.

"Ja, ja!" he said. "*Vatten, meckke vatten!*"

"Got you!" translated Fred. "Water coming—lots of it. What can we do?"

Blithers came forward with a suggestion.

"I wonder if we've got time to reach the hills on either side of the valley before it comes!"

"We might," replied Fred; "but we couldn't leave my uncle behind, and he can't walk."

"How about the motor?"

A cry from below stairs interrupted them.

"It's too late, I'm afraid," Fred decided.

"The water must have struck."

"You're safer here than you would be anywhere else," Mr. Dodd assured the huddled group. "This house is built of stone, and it will stand like a lighthouse."

Servants came pouring up from below, frightened and crying. Hawkins rushed to the stairs to hold them back.

"What are you doing?" demanded Fred.

"The kitchen servants aren't allowed upstairs," Hawkins replied. "It's the rule of the house, sir."

"Well, break the rule, then! You can't drown the whole lot just because of a silly rule. Let 'em up!"

The first of the servants thus liberated was Nora, the cook. She dropped a wooden case that she was carrying and fled to the arms of Augustus Johnson, who patted her back with a hand that would have disarranged the vertebrae of a person less adequately padded than Nora. Meanwhile, Augustus looked over the shoulder of his inamorata at the rest of the company with a sheepish and apologetic grin.

Fred kicked aside the box which the cook had dropped. He noticed that it was labeled "one gross Pfefferblätter's Predigested Meal Wafers."

When the group of house servants scattered a bit, Fred spied the chauffeur who had driven them from the city.

"Just the man I'm looking for!" he exclaimed. "We want to start back right away."

"Hah!" ejaculated the man. "You've got a fat chance! The only part of that taxicab that's above water now is the meter. I took that off and brought it with me." In

confirmation of his statement he produced it from behind him, red flag and all. "She's still ticking," he assured himself, after listening to it. "I've got her running on the hour basis. It's fifty-six dollars up to now!"

The other servants were not taking the catastrophe as calmly as did Nora, the cook. Perhaps the presence of Augustus reconciled her temporarily, or possibly the fact that he was there had made her forget how unpleasantly near destruction might be. Every one who had been down-stairs had wet feet, and some of the servants were not entirely dressed, as they had been aroused from their beds by the discovery of the flood. The noise they made would have been a credit to a country school at recess.

"Quiet!" demanded the master of the house. "Listen to me! You're all safe enough. What does it matter if the first floor is afloat? You don't see any water coming up here, do you? This house is built of stone, and it isn't going to drift away. I am the only one who is going to lose anything."

Somewhat reassured by their master's confidence in the safety of the house, the servants quieted down and went about making things as comfortable as possible for the night.

"Of course you can't go home now," said Mr. Dodd, speaking with grudging pleasantness to his nephew.

"This will subside by morning, won't it?" Fred questioned eagerly.

"It might," his uncle replied, "and then again it might not. There is an old dam at the foot of the valley, and it used to hold the water before I reclaimed this place by putting the present dam higher up. I don't know whether the old dam will hold or not. If it does, it will probably take several days to empty the basin through the opening I made to carry off the normal discharge of the river. At any rate, you are all right here, and I would like to see some more of your wife, Fred."

"How about Blithers?" Fred suggested tentatively. It was a topic he did not care to broach, but which had to be tackled some time. "How about Blithers and his wife?"

Uncle Cato scowled. It was an unsavory subject as far as he was concerned.

"I wish she had been caught in the flood and never got here!" he growled inhospitably. "But I suppose we have got to take

care of her. I'll give her a room somewhere. Hawkins," he called to his butler, "assign Mr. and Mrs. Blithers a room somewhere on this floor for the night."

"Yes, sir."

"They'll have to have two rooms," interrupted Fred hastily.

"Why?" His uncle turned on him with a savage question.

"Because, well—I was thinking of their comfort and—"

"Nonsense! One room is enough for you and Mrs. Wetherill. It's enough for your servants. Hawkins, one room!"

"Yes, sir."

"We didn't come prepared to stay," interjected Flora. "I am afraid we haven't any nightclothes or things of that sort."

"We can fix that, too," said Uncle Cato, who, now that he had taken charge, seemed to be a mountain of efficiency. "When my wife left, she didn't take any of the clothes that I had bought for her. Said she didn't want anything of mine; so we have closets full of truck. Hawkins, move one of Mrs. Dodd's wardrobes into Mrs. Wetherill's room. That largest one, I think, has several complete outfits in it. She had it packed for a trip to Palm Beach." He turned to Flora. "You and Mrs. Blithers will find all you need in the trunk."

The storm appeared to be increasing in fury. Sheets of rain lashed the windows, and occasional flashes of lightning, followed by rumbling thunder, frightened the women. By the flashes of light they could see the black expanse of water hurrying by. There was nothing else in sight. The Dodd mansion was practically an island.

George Fitzgerald and Hyla were shown to the room that had been assigned to them, and Flora and Fred withdrew to their more sumptuous quarters. Almost immediately a couple of men brought in a large wardrobe trunk, and opened it for Flora's inspection.

When they had gone, she surveyed her treasure with a smile.

"Isn't this fun?" she said. "I hope she has lots of pretty things. I just love to explore, and to try on some one else's clothes!" She happened to catch sight of Fred's face. "You don't look very happy about it. What's the matter?"

"My wife!" he murmured hoarsely. "My wife is with that scoundrel, George Fitzgerald!"

"I had forgotten." Flora paused with her hand on one of the drawers of the trunk. "But I don't think George would let her flirt with him."

"Let her flirt with him!" repeated Fred in horror. "You don't know George! Let her? Did you think for an instant that he wouldn't start it?"

Flora dimpled.

"He won't. He's too jealous of your being here with me."

"I wish I felt as sure of that as you are!"

"Isn't this adorable?" the girl exclaimed, holding an exquisitely embroidered dressing-gown. "Mrs. Dodd certainly had extraordinarily good taste in clothes. And she must be my type, too. Hold this a second while I slip into it."

Fred obediently did as he was told. His mind was elsewhere, picturing his darling Hyla in the power of that ruthless renegade, George Fitzgerald.

"Tuck in this lace business," Flora suggested, turning toward him with the dressing-gown held open, so that he could see what she meant. "It's caught on a hook or something."

It was while Fred, with the fairly deft hand of a six-months-married man, was attempting to remedy the difficulty, that the door was flung open dramatically.

"Ha! What did I tell you?" It was a bitter, soul-searing exclamation that George Fitzgerald addressed to Mrs. Hyla Wetherill, as they stood in the doorway in the rôles of Mr. and Mrs. Blithers.

"Oh, Fred!" was all that Hyla could summon to her lips, but there was an ocean of meaning in the two monosyllables.

"False friend!" George muttered with suppressed emotion. "Take your arms from around that woman, before I kill you in your tracks!"

"I haven't got my arms around this woman," Fred said in self-defense—not with any great show of spirit, however. "Besides, how are you going to kill me? I doubt if you could do it."

"We were just speaking of you," interposed Flora pleasantly. "Fred was—"

"I can see that you must have been speaking of us!" Sarcasm came incongruously from George's lips while he was garbed in the livery of Blithers. "You were talking about us, all right! Any one could see that. I suppose you were discussing

whether to use arsenic or ground glass in our food!"

"Don't be unreasonable, George. Fred was merely unfastening a hook for me."

"Oh, he was! Thank Heaven we arrived in time! Ye gods, are you shameless?"

"You're insanely jealous!"

"Jealous? Me? Jealous? You flatter yourself. I pride myself that there is one thing that I am not, and that is jealous. Ha! I was merely trying to protect you from gossip. That's the way it goes. I try to put over a kind act, and you accuse me of being jealous. That's all the reward I get. What's the use?"

With that last despairing hypothetical question unanswered, George Fitzgerald flung himself, face down, across the bed and buried his features in the lacy coverlet.

"Hyla!" said Fred, extending his arms to his wife.

She was worn out with fatigue and emotion. Her weary eyes showed it. Surely she could not resist so tempting an appeal to rest her droopy head on her husband's shoulder!

She did waver for a moment, but the transient indecision was succeeded by an expression of cool self-command as she walked past him to Flora.

"That's a beautiful piece of work, isn't it?" she said, running an appraising hand over the texture of the dressing-gown.

"Isn't it? You should see the other things in this trunk. Very evidently Mrs. Dodd has not given up the hope of a future life on this earth. Look at this gown! Isn't that a dream?"

"And see this suit of underwear! You could crumple it all up into a ball in one hand, and have room for a lot of other things besides."

"Now what use do you suppose a wealthy society woman would have for a thing like this?" Flora Cora held up a nondescript white silk knit garment, which might have been a union suit, only that there did not seem to be quite enough of it.

"Oh, I know!" Hyla came forward with the solution. "It's a swimming-suit."

"Yes, but look how low it is cut, and how short the trunks are. Why, in my professional work I never wear as little as this!"

"But that is for use only in the pool at the Woman's Athletic Club, or in

natatoriums where men are not admitted. It's the regulation costume. I've worn them. They don't bind under the arms or anything."

"No, I can see that they wouldn't. This one has never been worn. It's a thirty-six—same size that I wear. Believe me, if Mrs. Dodd dares to appear in that, I don't blame her husband for being heart-broken at losing her. There's a mystery here somewhere!"

Attracted by their instinctive interest in clothes and the no less strong love of exploration, the two women were soon on terms of chatty intimacy, with apparently no suggestion of the shadow which had fallen on the meeting.

Fred watched the scene for a moment with amazement, and threw up his hands. Then, seeing that Fitzgerald, from his position on the bed, had also observed what was going on, he offered his friend a cigar, which George accepted in puzzled silence.

"There's no book of rules to account for 'em," Fred assured the uncomprehending bachelor, as he held a match to his own cigar and then proffered the light. "I see by the paper to-night that the Giants have picked up a new pitcher down South who looks like a big-time winner!"

"Green stuff!" observed George sagely, getting up from the bed. "Can't tell anything about those 'finds' until they've worked out one season. Come on in here where the clothes chatter won't bother us, and I'll tell you some dope I heard yesterday."

Arm in arm, trailing a cloud of smoke, the two men abandoned the mystery of what women find to talk about, and made themselves comfortable in one of the adjoining dressing-rooms.

## XI

PERHAPS half an hour later Flora Cora Kelly poked her head through the door and coughed slightly, partly because of the smoke and partly to attract their attention.

"Mrs. Wetherill and I are going to bed," she announced.

"Together?" from Fred.

"Certainly!"

"We've never been separated—" began the husband.

"Then it's time you were. Besides, your wife doesn't want to be with you."



"Is that so, Hyla?" demanded her husband in a loud tone of voice through the half-opened door.

"Ye-es," came reluctantly from Hyla.

"There you are!" Flora shut the door abruptly, cutting off all argument—possibly for fear that her ally would weaken.

"Here we are," admitted George. "With the girls all safe for the night, you and I might as well turn in. We'll use that room that was assigned to me and—Mrs. Blithers." He grinned a little in retrospect as he pronounced the name.

"I—I—I couldn't, George," stammered Fred.

"Couldn't what?"

"Couldn't go that far away." Fred returned uneasily, avoiding his friend's eye. "Hyla isn't used to being with any one but me, and—well, something might happen in the night, and she'd get frightened. I'd rather be within call. You go to that other room, and I'll just stretch out here on the floor with my clothes on."

"Me go and leave you here?" Once more George laughed shortly and sarcastically. "Don't make me laugh! I suppose you and Flora have a date in here after you get rid of me. Ha! Nothing doing, *Don Juan!* I'll stay here too."

"Very well! I was only looking out for your comfort. If you choose to strain all your muscles by sleeping on a hard floor, all right. It's nothing to me. I assure you that I would not do it except that I am married and have certain responsibilities."

The conversation languished in the dressing-room. Not so in the bedroom occupied by the ladies.

"Did you ever in your life see anything so adorable as this night-dress?" came in muffled ecstasy in the voice of Hyla.

"You little witch!" exclaimed Flora.

"It's awfully thin," demurred Hyla.

"Well, you don't expect to wear it out in a tornado, you know. You have beautiful hair, dear, and your neck and shoulders are positively an incentive to cannibalism."

"I only wish I were one-half as lovely as you are!" murmured Hyla. "Your figure is perfect."

"I make my living with it," explained Flora with matter-of-fact complacency. "I spend most of my time keeping fit."

"You look too cute for anything in those baby-blue pajamas."

"I admit it's a becoming color. What a shame for no one to see you in your nightgown but me! You're too adorable! I'm going to call your husband in."

"No, no!" protested the voice of Hyla, not very convincingly. "I h-h-hate him!"

"You certainly do if you're not going to give him a flash at you in that rig. Really and truly, though, if you want to punish him dreadfully, let him look at you, and then say good night."

Now all this conversation had been carried on in subdued tones. The sudden unfriendliness and ensuing quiet between the men, however, had made a vacuum on their side of the door which swiftly absorbed every word uttered in the other room. Fred and George had tried not to listen too obviously, but neither of them would have spoken for worlds, for fear of missing something.

A little murmured conversation they missed entirely, and then Flora Cora Kelly opened the door once more and thrust in a fluffy head.

"You're to come in a minute, Mr. Wetherill, and see how cunning your wife looks!"

"With pleasure," said Fred with alacrity, springing up and starting for the door.

But he had only proceeded a few steps when his progress was arrested violently and he was jerked back roughly.

"You enter that room over my dead body!" George growled in his ear.

"Why, what are you getting so excited about?" inquired Fred innocently. "She's my own wife, ain't she?"

"Both of 'em aren't. How do I know but that this is a frame-up? If you want to see your wife, have her come in here."

"With you here? You're crazy!"

"Then you don't see her."

"I tell you I will! My wife wants me, and I'm going to her."

"Ouch! You hypothetical son of a sea-cook, to kick me in the shins! Just for that you can take a seat on the floor."

Bang! They both did. The windows jarred and the furniture rattled as they rolled over and over, locked together with feet, knees, legs, arms, and hands.

"Ugh!" This reply from one of the contestants to a fist accurately planted in his stomach.

C-c-c-r-ash, tinkle, tinkle! An overturned table containing a drinking-glass and a pitcher of ice-water.

Finally Fred technically got his old friend down; but as soon as he tried to leave him to go to the door, George instantly clung to him as dead weight. Then, when Fred was exhausted by his struggles to get away, George, quite rested, promptly flopped him on his back and sat calmly on his chest.

But victory was of no avail to George, either, for he dared not leave his fallen adversary for a moment. After they had repeated these turn-about tactics several times they came to a realization of the futility of their efforts, and patched up a truce while they considered matters.

It was while they sat in chairs placed purposely close to each other that the electric lights went out.

An exclamation of dismay from the other room brought forth a reassuring explanation from George.

"The electric-light wires have been short-circuited by the flood. There's no danger, is there, Fred? Say, where are you? Gone!"

In reaching out for his friend, George had discovered an empty space where Fred's body should have been. Two leaps in the dark brought George to the door, knocking down a chair and colliding with Fred *en route*. Once more the two men resumed their customary reclining positions on the floor, one resting comfortably on the other's chest until he got his wind, and then getting underneath and playing mattress for a while.

When they were quite exhausted, they stretched out side by side on the floor, George keeping a firm clasp of Fred's fingers. Thus, hand in hand, just as the *Babes in the Wood* must have slept, the two men relaxed gradually. Fred's last waking recollection was of George turning over and over in a vain attempt to find a soft spot on the floor.

## XII

NEITHER of the men slept very well. It was only dimly daylight when Fred opened his eyes to the world once more, and wondered why he felt as if he had been run through a rock-crusher. His shoulder-blades ached, and his backbone was all corrugated like the cardboard that is so much used for packing.

He stretched his arms. Some one had apparently been tying knots in them, and

they pained him severely. He stretched his legs. No, they refused to stretch. They were numb and dead to sensation.

"For the love of Mike!"

Fred sat up suddenly, to see what had happened to his extremities.

He discovered the answer immediately. Across his feet lay the legs of his friend, who was sleeping at right angles to him. When he tried to remove the weight, he found that he was tied to George's feet with his own necktie. Apparently Fitzgerald was taking no chances on Wetherill's making an escape during the night. He must have stayed awake painfully and put on that manacle after Fred went to sleep.

To see if the alarm would really work, Fred tried to get up, jerking his friend around even a little unnecessarily as he did so. George awoke promptly and disagreeably.

"What in—" he began, and then scowled at his prisoner as recollections awoke in his brain. "Oh, you would try to get away, would you?"

"I certainly would! Did you imagine that your society was anything I cared to make sure of forever? Your face isn't so much to look at, and those clothes were pretty funny even before you slept in them."

"I thought maybe—ouch, my back!"

"Got a few knots in it, I hope. Kindly return my necktie. You had a lot of rind to borrow it in the first place."

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know. I'm all through sleeping on that floor though. I don't expect ever to get back the use of all my muscles, as it is, but I'm going to save what there are left. Right now I'm going to take a cold bath, to see if this headache I've got is a permanent fixture."

"All right!" George agreed sourly, untying the silk thong that bound them together. "You try it first. If it works for you, I'll take one next."

Owing to the stiff and painful condition of his muscles, Fred prepared for his bath very slowly. George thoughtfully went in and locked the door leading to the other dressing-room, and removed the key.

"Thanks, old chap," Fred murmured sarcastically. "You're so thoughtful it must hurt you sometimes."

Fred stalked majestically in to the tiled glories of that sunken pool. He paused a

moment to prepare himself for the shock, and plunged in.

The shock proved even more than he bargained for, judging from the yell and the sounds of terrific splashing which issued from the bath almost immediately and struck upon the listening ear of George Fitzgerald in the dressing-room.

The sound preceded Fred into the dressing-room only by a fraction of a second. Sound travels eleven hundred feet per second, and Fred was doing about nine hundred and fifty.

"Something bit my foot!" he exclaimed, white-faced and trembling, sinking into a chair, and then rising again almost instantly, because it contained his derby hat.

"It was only the seal," George explained.

"Only the seal? What in Sam Hill was a seal doing in the bath?"

"Probably Flora put him there last night. He didn't hurt your foot any," George added scornfully, as his friend bent over to examine his pedal extremities with tender care. "He has been trained to nibble at toes in the water. You saw him do it in the act. Go on back and finish your bath!"

"Not on your life! You go in and furnish breakfast for that monster, if you wish. I'm going to get dressed. I tell you, that seal is hungry. Listen, he is calling for you. Go in and feed him one of your left feet."

There was no question but that the seal was calling for something. He was letting out a series of wails that had all the vehemence and sorrow of an Arizona coyote looking for the breakfast he ought to have had the week before last.

Fred and George were not the only ones who heard the sounds from the tiled bath. Hyla and Flora both noticed them, Hyla as part of an uneasy dream she was having, but Flora with instant, wide-awake alertness. She knew what they meant, and she rose immediately to answer the call of her pet in distress. She dashed through the unoccupied dressing-room to the bath.

Quite naturally she found the door locked, but luckily George heard her attempts to open it. Anxious to keep on first-class terms with his lady-love, he hastened to unlock it.

"You've been abusing Freddy!" she accused him as she entered. "And he's hungry."

"He's got nothing on me. I'm hungry, too."

"But he doesn't understand. If you really loved me, and wanted to square yourself with me, you'd get Freddy something to eat."

"But how?"

"You saw those goldfish in Mr. Dodd's room last night? Freddy is very fond of goldfish."

"I know, Flora, but those are pet goldfish."

"If you don't want to get them, never mind! All I can say is that I'm glad I found out how selfish you were before I married you!"

"Now Flora!"

"Don't call me Flora!"—she paused significantly—"unless you get some of those goldfish!"

George thought it as well not to discuss the matter further. He backed away hastily into the next room, and shut and locked that door. Then, without explanation to his half-dressed friend, he opened the door to the outer corridor and stepped out gloomily on his quest for the pet goldfish.

Hyla, back in the bedroom, began to regain waking consciousness. Something had aroused her. What was it?

She yawned and stretched luxuriously in the soft, warm bed, which contrasted vividly in comfort with the floor where her husband had spent the night. She was a little sorry for Fred, but not very much, because he certainly had given her a horrid shock when he had pretended before his uncle that Flora was his wife.

Of course, it was all a joke. In the gray light of morning she could afford to laugh at it herself. She turned over to see if Flora was awake. They would have a good laugh over the situation together.

But Flora was not there. There was the dent in the pillow where her head had been, but the girl herself was gone. Hyla looked about the rather dimly lighted room to see if her companion was dressing quietly so as not to wake her up.

No, Flora was not in the room.

Then the sound of voices attracted her attention. That was Flora's voice. To whom was she talking?

Hyla rose on one pink elbow, a distracting picture of tousled loveliness, in order to hear better. Not that she would eavesdrop, but it certainly seemed no more than right that she should know what was going on.

The conversation was too vague to catch, but it seemed to come from the dressing-room, the door of which stood open. Hyla climbed out of bed and paddled over to peep in.

There was no one in the dressing-room, either, but the door of the bath stood open, and from there came Flora's voice, soft but unmistakably distinct. She was cooing.

"Did her own little Freddy think its darling Flora would never come?" Flora inquired. "Never mind, here she is now, and she will give her own ducky darling a kiss to make its little heart all well!"

Hyla waited to hear no more, but slunk away on noiseless bare feet. It was too awful to comprehend, and yet she had heard it clearly. Then all that nightmare of the night before had been no nightmare at all, but the ghastly truth! Fred was carrying on an affair with that woman, and this visit to his uncle was only a trumped-up excuse to get away with her!

Hyla's soul sickened, and she longed to crawl away somewhere and die. After what she had heard, she couldn't stay and face that woman. It would take more self-control than she possessed not to fly at her and rend her limb from limb. She must get away!

Crying softly to herself, and acting almost entirely upon instinct, Hyla rapidly dressed herself. Fortunately she had laid out a morning gown from the wardrobe trunk the night before, so she did not have to put on her own sodden and wrinkled garments.

With her shoes in her hand, she unlocked the door to the outer corridor and slipped out into the passageway, determined to find some place in that great house where she could be alone to struggle with her sorrow.

### XIII

WHEN Flora came out from her morning romp with her pet, her baby-blue pajamas clung tenaciously to her million-dollar figure—so advertised on all billing—but she was refreshed and full of vigor for the new day.

"My dear," she began, and then stopped, when she noticed that she was addressing an unoccupied bed. "Now where can that girl be?"

She tiptoed over to the door of the men's dressing-room and listened. There was no sound. She rapped.

"What do you want?" growled Fred.

He had lost a sock, and had his own private suspicions that George Fitzgerald had hidden it during his absence, or had taken it with him.

"Is Mrs. Wetherill there?" Flora inquired.

"No, she isn't. Of course not! Isn't she with you?"

"No. I thought sure she must have gone in there."

"No such luck!" Just then it occurred to him that George Fitzgerald was gone, too. "Great Scott, I see it all now!"

"What?"

"George is meeting her somewhere outside! He left here about five minutes ago."

Acting on this tip, Flora went to her own outside door and found it unlocked.

"You're right," she told the unhappy Fred, who was looking wildly for his scattered clothing. "She's gone!"

"The double-dyed scoundrel!" muttered Fred. "Trying to pull the wool over my eyes by pretending to be jealous of me!"

He finished dressing minus whatever articles of haberdashery he failed to find easily. The resulting costume resembled the get-up of the host at an all-night poker-party, but at least he was covered. Thus weirdly appareled, he let himself out into the hall and started out on the search for his recalcitrant wife and his false friend.

It was quite early, apparently. Either that, or else the entire household was sleeping late to make up for the excitement of the night before. Somehow it seemed almost criminal for every one to be asleep with that silent flood sweeping by outside. At least there ought to have been a lookout, and some one at the helm.

A door opened at the far end of the corridor. Some one was stirring, after all. A man stepped out into the hall. Fred did not recognize him, but supposed that he was one of the servants.

"What time is it, please?" Fred asked pleasantly.

"I'll look," responded the man, lifting up the box in his hand. "One hundred and fifty-six dollars and seventy-five cents!"

It was the chauffeur of the taxi.

The next door opened, and from it issued George Fitzgerald, bearing in his hands the glass aquarium.

"What have you done with my wife?" Fred demanded hotly.



"Not so loud!" George cautioned. "I'll tell you. I've got her here in this glass bowl. She's hiding down under that little stone grotto."

"Don't you know where Hyla is?"

"I do not."

"What are you doing with the goldfish, my man?" inquired a voice, politely, but with a certain menace in the quiet tone.

"Why, Hi was—" George began.

"Come, Blithers, explain yourself!" Hawkins continued. "I am at the head of the servants in this establishment, and I must know what goes on. Pardon me, Mr. Wetherill, I am only doing my duty." To George once more: "Come, Blithers, speak up! What were you doing?"

"Why, sir, Hi were taking of these goldfish hout for a little hairing, sir."

"Quite unnecessary," reproved Hawkins.

"They never eat anything but prepared fish-food. Take the globe back, Blithers, and do not interfere with it again. Those goldfish are very valuable, and were especial pets of Mrs. Dodd's when she was here. Take it back."

"Hi will, sir."

"A little herring!" snorted Hawkins, when the other had gone to obey his superior's command. "Where would he think he would be getting any, I wonder? I could do with a bit of fish for breakfast myself."

"Have you found them?" inquired Flora, as she joined the group, fastening the top buttons of her dress as she came—a lovely pink morning thing that lost none of its beauty by being displayed on the lithe and buoyant figure of the diving Venus.

"I found George," Fred observed gloomily. "He was stealing the goldfish," he added with a furtive side glance, as the butler moved off majestically. "Hawkins made him put it back."

"The heartless wretch! Just for that I hope he has to go hungry some time himself."

"You're likely to get your hope almost immediately."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Nothing except that all our supplies consist of a case of Pfefferblätter's Predigested Meal Wafers. You remember the cook saved those from the kitchen."

"But those aren't food!"

"Pfefferblätter says they are."

A muffled sob down the corridor drew

their attention from the discussion of the commissary.

"It's Hyla," declared Fred positively. "I should recognize her snuffle anywhere."

Fred and Flora, escorted aimlessly by the loudly ticking chauffeur, moved to the scene of the trouble, which proved to be at the head of the stairs. Hyla stood on the highest step, gazing longingly into the still, black pool of water that came up to within two or three steps of the top, and sobbing as if her heart would break.

"What's the matter, sweetheart?" demanded Fred, putting an arm comfortingly around his wife's shoulders. "Tell her own darling Freddy!"

"Don't touch me, you deceitful wretch!" She threw his arm off disdainfully. "You're not my darling Freddy!"

"Why, Hyla!" Deepest injury rang honestly in Fred's voice. He was genuinely hurt.

"What is it, dear?" Flora inquired in soothing accents. "Did you drop something in the water?"

Hyla shook her head in negative misery.

"Then why are you standing here at the top of the stairs and crying your eyes out?"

Hyla sobbed afresh.

"Tell me, that's a dear!"

"W-w-why, I w-w-want t-t-to drown m-m-myself," she sobbed, "b-b-but I d-don't w-w-want to s-s-spoil this b-beautiful d-d-dress!"

## XIV

AFTER all, Hyla's reluctance to wet the gown she had on was not without some foundation in reason. It was a miraculous confection of some soft gray material that made her seem like nothing so much as a flesh-and-blood materialization of the spirit of smoke, with stray wisps of the original vapor clinging to her for a garment.

"What on earth did you want to drown yourself for?" Flora catechized with gentle insistence.

"Oh dear, I don't want to live any longer!"

"Apparently. But why not?"

"My husband—Mr. Wetherill—oh, oh, oh!" She paused to enjoy a few racking sobs.

"Yes?"

"Loves another woman!"

"Nonsense!"

"Of course you'd say that. You're the one!" She struggled weakly in the strong arms of the diving Venus. "Let me go! I'll jump in anyway."

Flora calmed her patiently.

"What makes you think your husband loves me?"

"I h-h-heard you talking to him this morning when you thought I was asleep."

"Talking to him? I don't remember."

"It was before you got dressed."

"You're mistaken."

"I wish I were, but I'm not. You called him your own little Freddy and said you would give him a kiss."

"What in the name of Heaven is all this?" demanded Fred, startled out of his matter-of-fact masculine complacency.

Flora laughed.

"Why, you poor little goose!" she chided Hyla tenderly. "I dare say it sounded funny, but I was talking to my pet seal."

"Your pet seal!" Hyla stopped crying to voice the incredulous exclamation.

"Yes. His name is Freddy, too. I kept him in the bath all night. Did I forget to tell you?"

"But the very idea of carrying a pet seal about the country is ridiculous!" Hyla's own composure returned rapidly in the face of this incomprehensible statement from Flora.

"I always take Freddy wherever I go."

"I'll believe that when I see him!"

"You're going to believe it in about a minute, then."

Flora already had Hyla by the arm, and was urging her back toward the apartment they had occupied during the night. Fred fell in at the rear and followed the party at a discreet distance. He would not obtrude his presence until the dénouement, and then he would be standing ready when Hyla wanted to melt into his arms and be forgiven for her jealousy.

Thus they trooped into the bedroom, through it to the dressing-room, and thence to the tiled bath. The waters of the sunken pool were clear as crystal.

"Well, where is he?" Hyla asked pointedly.

Obviously there was no seal, trained or otherwise, in that pool.

"He was here a moment ago," Flora declared.

"Huh!"

The exclamation wasn't ladylike a bit, but it escaped involuntarily from Mrs. Wetherill's lips. To think that this woman had thought to fool her with a fiction as impossible as the one she had uttered about a seal with the same name as her husband!

"He must be here somewhere," Flora asserted firmly. "Oh, Freddy, Freddy, Freddy!"

"Why don't you bark when she calls you like that?" Mrs. Wetherill suggested with icy amiability to her husband, who stood by helplessly. "Wag your tail or something, to show that you're alive."

"Now, Hyla—"

"Or if you don't feel at home on dry land, jump into the pool and frisk around a bit. Don't mind me! Besides, I'd like to see you do it."

There was no question about it. Hyla was enjoying the discomfiture of her better half. He had not realized that so much animus existed in that sleekly coifed little head.

"I want my Freddy!" mourned Flora. "Where can he be? Help me find him!"

She left the bath herself and began searching the other rooms. Because there seemed nothing else to do, Mr. and Mrs. Wetherill followed her. Under the bed, in the closets, and in the drawers and trunks she looked. No luck!

"The door has been shut. He couldn't have got out there," she decided.

"But the sleeping-porch," suggested Fred. "The door to that is open."

"Do you suppose—" Flora began doubtfully, and then rushed out on the veranda.

There was nothing there. Even the rugs and furniture had been taken in for the winter, and had not yet been replaced. Neither had the segments of screen been fitted to the sash. There was an unobstructed view of the valley, which now was a wide lake, dotted here and there with logs, timbers, and the floating roofs of houses.

During the night they had scarcely realized the extent of the inundation, but now, confronted by its muddy majesty, they all paused—even the bereaved Flora—to contemplate the sullen expanse that separated them from dry land. The water had risen to a level within a few inches of the floor on which they were standing.

Even the great stone structure that sheltered them seemed puny by comparison with

the surrounding flood. They wondered if the inhabitants of the frame houses that drifted by had escaped. Somehow they had not thought of the others who might be affected by the bursting dam.

Flora was the first to recover and to revert to her own personal troubles.

"He's gone!" she cried. "Freddy's gone! I had forgotten about the flood. Freddy is just crazy about nice muddy water. Here's a tuft of his fur!" She wept over the memento, which she had found caught on a nail-head in the railing. "He's gone, and he'll never come back!"

Flora was overcome by a passion of sobs. Hyla stood by and laughed heartily. This was burlesque of a very high order, and it seemed only fitting that she should show her appreciation.

"How can you laugh when my heart is broken?" demanded Flora fiercely.

"Oh, this is so funny!" Hyla cried between gales of merriment. "What did you two take me for, to think that I would swallow a yarn like that?"

"Go away!" Flora wailed. "Let me be! Don't ever speak to me again!"

"Thank you, I don't intend to, you husband-snatcher! I don't intend to speak to either of you again!"

"Hyla!"—an imploring exclamation from the aforementioned husband.

"Never again," she replied dramatically, and swept by him with the hem of her garment disdainfully raised. "I'm going to your uncle to explain everything!"

She passed out of the door.

"For Heaven's sake, Hyla, wait a minute!" Fred Wetherill followed her. "You don't understand. Don't spoil the whole game! The worst of it is over now."

"Don't try to stop me! My mind is made up."

She went on unwaveringly toward Cato Dodd's door.

## XV

"No whisky! O-o-oh!"

The exclamation and the ensuing yell were so loud that they could be heard throughout the entire house.

Fred and his wife halted a moment in the hall. Then Fred, preceding Hyla, opened the door of his uncle's room, within which, he judged, was the cause of the disturbance.

Correct! Cato Dodd, in a long dressing-

gown, stood confronting his butler, beating alternately on the floor with his cane and his bandaged foot.

"No whisky! Ouch! No whisky! Ouch! No—ouch, ouch, ouch!" he was saying with prayerful fervor. "Do you mean to tell me that I am to suffer infernal tortures during my last few hours on earth because a concrete-headed butler by the fool name of Hawkins forgot to keep track of the supplies in his cellar?"

"There is plenty in the cellar, sir, but that is two stories under water."

"Oh! Well, why don't you keep some on every floor? Next time you have a case of Dodd's Malt Whisky in every room in the house, including the attic!"

"Yes, sir."

"Don't stand there like a confounded painted cigar-sign! Hurry around a little! If I'm going to expire for the lack of a little medicinal whisky, I might as well have one good breakfast before I die! See what these people want to eat, and bring mine here right away. I want some sausage and griddle-cakes and a couple of pork-chops and a cup of coffee."

The butler coughed nervously.

"Well, what is it? Don't keep me waiting. I like your society, but I prefer food. I'm starving!"

"It's about breakfast, sir. There isn't any sausage or pork-chops."

"Oh, all right! I don't care. Nobody looks after me here, anyway. You'll all be glad when I'm gone, though goodness knows I don't cause any one much bother. My comfort is the last thing any one thinks of in this house. You know I'm fond of sausage for breakfast, but no one has provided any. That's the way it goes. Never mind, I can suffer a little more, I guess. Bring me the griddle-cakes and coffee."

"There aren't any of those, either."

The butler blurted this out all at once, as if it were a relief to get it over with.

"No griddle-cakes and coffee! Well, what have we got in this wretched hovel?"

"There isn't anything, sir. It's all downstairs."

"No food?"

"Nothing but a case of Professor Pfefferblätter's Predigested Meal Wafers. Cook brought them up last night. They're in this box here. I was going to ask you, sir, would you have one of those?"

A groan was the only reply. Cato Dodd sank dazedly into a chair.

"I'll die first!" he managed to articulate at last, and then he turned his head wearily to one side of the chair head-rest and closed his eyes. "Starved to death!" he murmured faintly. "Starved to death!"

"Well, 'ow about some breakfast?" This noisy question came from George Fitzgerald, as he burst into the room and discovered everybody standing around like the mob scene in "Julius Cæsar."

"Hush, Blithers, hush!" warned Hawkins with a scowl calculated to wither an under-servant's soul to a charred wisp. He pointed to Mr. Dodd's seated figure and repeated: "Hush!"

"Hall right, Hi'm 'ushed. What's hall the trouble with 'is nobbs?"

"The master is very low, very low," Hawkins whispered.

"What 'appened?"

"He wants his morning toddy, and it's killing him not to get it. It's the first time in thirty years he hasn't had it."

"Then why don't you give hit to 'im? Hi'll 'ave a wee sip myself if there's a bit left."

"There ain't any up-stairs. It's all down in the cellar, under water."

"Hi know where there is some!" George made the announcement triumphantly.

"Where?" The monosyllabic question shot from the lips of Cato Dodd, who suddenly sat upright.

"Hi saw a box labeled Dodd's Malt Whisky hin the closet of the room where Hi slept. Hit was full of bottles. Hi could 'ear 'em rattle; and they must 'ave been full ones, too, because Hi could 'ardly lift hit, sir."

"Get it! Bring it here at once!"

"Yes, sir."

George departed like an orderly bearing despatches. The other occupants of the room turned to one another to engage in casual conversation, in order to fill in the time, only to discover that not one of them was on speaking terms with the person next to him or her. Therefore they waited in stony silence.

In a few moments George came back, bearing in his arms a wooden box conspicuously labeled with the trade-mark of the house of Dodd. He was followed by Flora, who still wept unobtrusively over the loss of her seal.

"Careful, my man," cautioned Cato Dodd, as George staggered under his burden.

"Hawkins, help him set it down gently."

"I know what this is, sir," said Hawkins.

"Mrs. Dodd—"

"Don't mention that woman's name!" thundered Cato imperatively. "Blithers, you may open the case with your own hands. Careful now!"

George ripped off the cover. It was fastened with only a few nails.

"Hand me a bottle, quick!"

George started to do as requested, but paused with a bottle unhandled.

"Come, come, what is the matter?"

"This is Clysmic, sir."

"What?"

"Clysmic water, sir, but maybe some of the hothers—"

He left the sentence in mid air and dived into the case once more. The second bottle was White Rock water. He placed it beside the Clysmic on the floor. The third was Clicquot Club, the next Apollinaris, and so on until at last twenty-four bottles of the best-known brands of mineral water stood on the floor.

Mr. Dodd gave up hope after seeing the label on the fourth bottle. When the box was empty he closed his eyes wearily and leaned back in his chair.

"Hawkins," he said faintly, "take those bottles out of my sight and break them!"

"Yes, sir."

"And Hawkins!"

"Yes, sir."

"Break them over Blithers's head!"

## XVI

CATO DODD sat with closed eyes and beat weakly on the arms of his chair with his clenched fists.

"I never want to see another drop of water as long as I live!" He repeated this at intervals, and varied it occasionally with "I'll die, I know I'll die! And nobody cares!"

And apparently nobody did. Every one was too busy with his or her own troubles to have any sympathy left over to expend on some one else. Hyla was nursing her resentment toward her apparently faithless husband and Flora. Flora was heart-broken about the loss of her seal, for which she blamed George in some unaccountable way. Fred and George hated each other cordially,



for reasons known only to the unfed male animal. The taxi chauffeur regarded every one else in the world jealously, and carried his meter around with him truculently, as if to dare any one to touch it at his peril.

Cato Dodd repeated his litany, "No more water, no more water as long as I live! What in Sam Hill? Is this floor wet? Did some armor-plated idiot leave the water turned on in the bath-room?"

He had opened his eyes at last. Sure enough, across the floor ran a trickle of water, which soon widened. It came in by the door. Cato Dodd eyed it in distaste and alarm, and held both feet up in the air—the bandaged one and the shod one equally high. His hands were elevated, too, in a gesture of despair. He had but one point of support.

"Who did it?" he shouted. "Mrs. Dodd, I suppose! She knows it will be fatal to me to get my feet wet!"

*Rap-a-tap-tap!*

Every one looked around to see whence the sharp summons came. Hawkins went to the half-opened door, but there was no one in the hall.

*Rap-a-tap-tap!*

A shadow at the window attracted the attention of the occupants of the room to the true cause of the disturbance. Outside, in the dripping rain, clinging precariously to the window-sill, was a man. All that was visible was a dirty face surmounted by a black, peaked cap and a pair of narrow shoulders. Organ-grinders' monkeys, climbing up to your window with a tin cup to beg for pennies, look like that.

Uncle Cato stared at the apparition with amazement. He passed his hand before his eyes.

"What is it?" he demanded querulously of Hawkins. "A ghost?"

"It's a man, sir."

*Rap-a-tap-tap!*

This time the summons was imperious. Hawkins went over and raised the window.

"How did you get here, my man?"

"How did I get here, you pie-faced mutt? I drove up in my limousine, of course!"

The others crowded around the window to see the man for themselves. He was squatted in an oil-barrel, which floated nearly level with the broad sill of the window.

"What do you wish? What is your business?"

"Anybody would think I was applying for admission to your lodge! Well, I ain't. I wouldn't belong to it—not if I had to wear them kind of pants. I don't mind telling you my business, though. I'm a plumber, and proud of it."

"The man says he is a plumber," Hawkins duly reported to his master.

"He is? Well, tell him to come right in and fix this leak."

Mr. Dodd pointed to the water, which was rapidly spreading to all corners of the room.

"You're to come in." Hawkins duly transmitted the message to the plumber in his barrel. "You're to come in. Mr. Dodd has a job for you."

"Oh!" The newcomer eyed the butler appraisingly. This was a new angle. "This is a job. I'm going to get paid for it. Is that it?"

"Quite correct."

The plumber reached in with two grimy hands, grasped the window-sill firmly, and scrambled out of his barrel into the room. The barrel, lightened of its burden, bobbed up jauntily and floated away.

"Good-by, old submarine," the plumber said, standing at the window and waving his hand at his departing craft. "Bum voyage, and all that stuff!"

Now that he stood on his feet, it became evident that he was a very small man, but active and wiry. His overalls were too large for him, and slumped in damp folds around his feet. He looked a little as if he had been shaken down and most of him had settled near the floor.

"Just my luck to move into a town the day before a flood struck it!" he informed the assembled company. "Now, what's the job?"

"Look at all this water on the floor," said Cato Dodd. "There's a leak somewhere, and I want you to fix it."

The plumber looked at the water speculatively. Then he went to the window and looked out. Then he laughed.

"There certainly is a leak, there certainly is a leak!" He laughed again. "But it's up the valley about two miles, in the big dam."

"What? Do you mean that the water is rising up to the second floor?"

"Man, that water is not only rising, she has riz. And here comes more of it!"

He was quite correct. A small added torrent swished down the hall and poured in at the door. There was about an inch and a half of water over all the floor.

"We had better go up to the next floor," suggested Hawkins.

"I suppose so," Cato Dodd assented wearily. "It doesn't make any difference where I die, but I suppose the rest of you might as well try to save yourselves!"

Hawkins helped Mr. Dodd to rise, and piloted him, complaining at every step, across the wet floor, which soaked through the bandage around his foot and gave him something new to worry about. The plumber, attracted by the legend on the box, saved the case of mineral water. George Fitzgerald, at Hawkins's suggestion, started to take up the aquarium with the goldfish in it, although fish seemed a foolish thing to save from a flood. Fred Wetherill thoughtfully shouldered the box of Pfefferblätter's Predigested Meal Wafers. You never could tell.

Half-way up the stairs he stopped.

"The girls!" he exclaimed to George. "Where are they?"

George stopped too.

"I don't know!"

"We mustn't leave them down-stairs to drown. Here, Hawkins, take this!"

Passing his box up to the butler, who stood at the top of the stairs, Fred turned back, followed by his friend, who had likewise shifted his burden to the protesting servant.

"Oh, Hyla! Hyla! Where are you?" Fred shouted.

There was no response.

"Flora! Flora Cora Kelly!" howled George.

Likewise no answer.

"Now where can they be?" Genuinely worried, Fred slopped through the ankle-deep water to the head of the stairs, which was now indicated only by a sentinel newel-post and an inclined banister which sloped almost immediately into the black pool. "Do you suppose they were drowned down there?"

"You couldn't drown Undine," George insisted.

"But they might have quarreled and gone down locked in each other's grasp!" Fred was drawing freely upon his imagination and his recollection of sensational literature.

"They'd let go fast enough under water!

Did you ever kick a couple of scrapping bulldogs off a dock? They forget all about their grievance against each other in one second. If bulldogs will let go, I guess girls will!"

"You don't know Hyla!"

"No, and I guess maybe I'm glad I don't. But those girls aren't drowned. They weren't mad enough for that. Oh, Flora!" George raised his voice once more as he led the way down the corridor, opening doors as they passed.

"Here I am!"

Into the corridor staggered Flora, her arms full of feminine finery, which she had obviously rifled from the absent Mrs. Dodd's wardrobe trunk. After her came Hyla, similarly laden.

"Good Heavens!" said George testily. "Did you go back just for that arm-load of truck?"

"I certainly did!"

"You were taking chances of being drowned!"

"No woman would care to be saved with all this French lingerie being ruined. Isn't that so, Hyla?"

"It is."

The two women appeared to be friends once more.

"It's beyond me!" George growled.

"Wait till you're married to one of 'em," advised Fred.

They proceeded up-stairs.

## XVII

THE third floor of the Dodd mansion was rather a shock, if you were not expecting it. It was apparently a shock even if you were expecting it, to judge from the remarks of Mr. Cato Dodd, owner of the establishment. He was voicing his opinion of the room as Fred and George came up the stairs.

"That picture makes me positively ill! Hawkins, I think I would prefer to drown down-stairs rather than die looking at this thing. Help me down!"

"I couldn't do that, sir. What would Mrs. Dodd say to me?"

"I don't care what she says to you after I'm dead. She'll probably say you made a neat job of it."

"Here, sir, sit in this chair, where you can look out of the window."

"All right! Fix the chair. Now give me your arm. Easy, Hawkins!"

"There you are, sir."

It was while Hawkins was doing as he was told that Fred and George and the girls came up the stairs and got the full force of the mural decorations in the ballroom. There was a great dormer-window at either end of the apartment. All the rest was decoration.

"Holy mackerel!" murmured Fred in a subdued voice. "What does it represent?"

"It is called 'Impression of a Japanese Maiden Dancing,'" Mr. Vogt volunteered calmly. He was used to the picture, and there was hardly any emotion in his voice.

"Do you think any maiden could dance like that? Why, here's her head—at least, it looks as if it's either her head or a purple cabbage. Away over here on the opposite wall is what looks like her foot."

"The artist has conveyed the impression that the girl was moving," the secretary explained glibly.

"She certainly was moving," admitted Fred. "And didn't she break up a lot of the Japanese furniture as she went along?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but that isn't broken Japanese furniture," replied Vogt.

"Not Japanese?"

"Not furniture. Those irregular splotches of color represent the applause of the people sitting around at the tables watching her, and that series of parallel lines is an impression of the gauze veil she is wearing for a costume."

"Gee, what a room to have delirium tremens in!"

"This is a wonderful pit here," said Hyla admiringly. "This sunset effect, I mean," she explained, pointing.

"That's the bucket of paint Mr. Dodd threw at the picture the first time he saw it," Vogt explained.

"Oh!"

Aside from the wall decorations, the ballroom was not an unpleasant apartment. It was in reality the finished-off attic of the building, as was attested by the slant of the ceiling at the corners and by the segment of roof outside, which sloped away from the dormer-windows. The furniture was rather fragile and weirdly colored, but there was a large, homy-looking fireplace, and a huge skylight overhead let in a cheerful flood of daylight.

Out of one of the windows was a splendid view of the valley, which had become a lake dotted with floating débris, and of the hills

beyond, gauntly wooded and vague in the mist now, but doubtless a dream of verdure in the summer. Fortunately it had stopped raining, at least for a moment, and the sun was making a brave struggle to break through and clear things up a bit.

Wreckage of all sorts was still drifting by. Apparently the water kept dislodging things from the bank as it rose, for there seemed to be an unending procession of wreckage—roofs of houses, barns, sheds, corn-cribs, chicken-coops, crates, furniture, and farming-implements.

"Oh-ai-ee! Oh-ai-ee!"

A tremendous wail shook the building. Any soul in such distress deserved to be put out of its misery.

"What is it?" demanded Mr. Dodd of George Fitzgerald, who happened to be nearest.

"I give up," replied George. "I'd be afraid to meet it, though—I know that!"

"It comes from down-stairs," decided Fred, who was listening at the entryway.

"Who is missing from our party?" Dodd asked.

Hawkins hastily looked every one over.

"Where is the Swede? Cook, did Gus come up with you?"

"I didn't notice. Isn't he here?"

"No!" Concerted reply from several speakers.

"Then it's him that's making the racket," decided the butler. "It don't sound like it was produced by a regular human being, and he ain't one."

The forlorn wails down-stairs continued.

"Perhaps the poor fellow is drowning," Hyla murmured sympathetically.

"I hardly think so, dear," Fred hastened to reassure her.

"I was not speaking to you," his wife snapped.

"That man must be badly 'urt," pronounced George Fitzgerald. "Hi'm going after 'im. We can't let 'im die that way!"

"No," admitted Mr. Dodd. "Finish him up quick, please!"

George plunged down-stairs once more and into water thigh-deep on the second floor.

"O-o-oh, hit's cold!" His exclamation floated back after him as he disappeared into the hall.

An anxious group awaited his reappearance at the top of the stairs. The wails grew louder.

"That guy could get a swell job with a circus," commented the plumber. "He's better and cheaper to run than a steam calliope."

"Here they come!"

Sloshing through the water, George pushed the blond young man to the foot of the stairs and literally forced him up. Augustus protested loudly all the way in Scandinavian idiom. At the top he turned and gazed mournfully at the damp depths below, letting out another wail as he did so.

"Here she is—over here!"

Fred turned the Scandinavian *Romeo* around, and pointed out Nora to him. With the cry of a frightened turkey-gobbler, Augustus flew to his love. Nora joined him in a pæan of reunited joy.

"This is dreadful," declared Cato Dodd. "Make him stop!"

Hawkins, trained to obedience, clapped an efficiently muffing hand over the open mouth of the yodler. The vocalist promptly bit the hand, and Hawkins added a resonant tenor to the medley of sound as he danced up and down holding his own hand.

"Am I going to be yowled to death in my own house?" demanded Cato Dodd. "Stop it, I say!"

Things quieted down a bit. That is, Nora and the butler desisted, and the Swedish lover toned down his endearments to a thrilling diapason moan not unlike that of a freshly weaned calf.

"You wouldn't hardly suspect them Norse races of being so passionate, would you?" the plumber commented philosophically, when the cause of Johnson's vocalization was explained to him.

The air was rather close up in the ballroom, and Hawkins, at the suggestion of his master, opened one of the wide dormer-windows. A gentle breeze sifted in. It had a wonderfully tonic effect upon the spirits and appetites of the party.

"It certainly is time for breakfast," hinted the plumber broadly.

"Tell that fool to be quiet!" said Mr. Dodd sharply. "I don't so much mind being starved to death, but I certainly don't intend to be reminded of my impending doom every few minutes."

No one could think of anything to talk about except breakfast, so a charged silence fell upon the flood sufferers. Had it not been that Mr. Dodd's watchful eye was upon

him, Fred would have opened the case of wafers and tried his luck with that near-food.

"Do you like goldfish, my dear?" Uncle Cato inquired of Flora, who at a sign from him had drawn a chair up near him.

"What's that?"

"I asked if you like goldfish."

"I don't know. I haven't eaten any yet."

This last with a rather hungry look at Midas disporting himself lonesomely in the glass globe. "Freddy just worships them," she added, and started to cry.

"What ails you, my girl? Don't cry! This place is damp enough as it is. What is the matter?"

"I loved Freddy so, and he was so sweet to me!"

"There, there!" Uncle Cato patted her arm in fatherly fashion. "Don't talk as if everything were over between you. He will always treat you just as nicely as he has in the past, or I'll know the reason why. Fred, come here!"

Mr. Wetherill wrenched himself away from a speculative consideration of the label on the box of Pfefferblätter's Predigested Meal Wafers, and joined his uncle and Flora.

"Yes, sir."

"You've been making this pretty little wife of yours unhappy. You're not as affectionate as you used to be. She has been crying about it. Comfort her, my boy. Remember that women are not like our own sterner sex. They have to be told that they are loved, or they get to brooding over it and thinking that their charms are fading, or some other confounded nonsense like that. Put your arm around her and tell her you love her. Let me see you do it!"

Fred shot a hasty glance at his wife. She met his eye, and then, angry at having been caught observing him, turned away disdainfully.

"Come, come, you're no nephew of mine if you are a laggard in love with such a wife as that!" said Uncle Cato, beaming genially upon Fred and the diving Venus.

"It's all right with me," whispered Flora. "Give him an eyeful!"

Thus coached, Mr. Wetherill folded her in his arms. She relaxed on his shoulder with a happy sigh.

"Do you love me?" Fred faltered in what he intended to be a subdued murmur. In



the empty silence of the ballroom the words rang out as if shouted through a megaphone.

"With all my heart and soul!" Flora replied fervently.

With a groan George Fitzgerald, who was watching intently, sank upon a spindle-legged chair. Mrs. Wetherill involuntarily allowed an articulate sob to escape her firmly pressed lips.

"What was that?" Uncle Cato peered around to see who had caused the disturbance. "Oh, it was only Blithers, and that wife of his, who had the brazen effrontery to follow you here. I hope she realizes now how futile are her chances to win you from your lawful wife. Kiss your wife, Fred! It warms my poor old dying heart to find in this world, so full of marital misfits, one couple at least who were made for each other."

When that was over Mr. Dodd, warm with benevolence, decided to spread the era of good feeling.

"Blithers," he commanded, "come here! You, too, Mrs. Blithers!"

Hyla took no notice of the summons until Fred touched her arm to attract her attention. When she saw who it was, she drew away as if she had been bitten by a snake.

"Don't touch me!"

"All right, but Uncle Cato wants to speak to you."

Hyla joined George Fitzgerald, who stood, a rather wobegone picture in his ill-fitting, unpressed livery, before Mr. Fixit, the matrimonial mess-maker.

"Now, Blithers, I forgive you for bringing me that case of mineral water. I realize that your intentions were good. I don't want to die hating any one as I hated you a few moments ago. It's better to be on good terms with every one. Now, why can't you two be loving and sweet like Mr. and Mrs. Wetherill? With an example like that before you, how can you hate each other so? I can't be happy myself, but I like to see the affairs of every one else move smoothly. Rank and station have nothing to do with true happiness. Two loving hearts and two gentle voices, be they cased in satin or homespun, are all that is necessary. Blithers isn't so bad, Mrs. Blithers. He probably has many good qualities beneath that unpleasant exterior. Draw him out, my dear, make the most of him, and some day, like an ugly grub, he will blossom forth in the

sun of your care into a gorgeous butterfly. And Blithers, look upon your wife, look upon—"

Uncle Cato stopped. He had looked upon Hyla himself for the first time—the first time, that is, in which he had given her anything like a careful scrutiny. "By George, Blithers, your wife is a beauty, too! Come here, Mrs. Blithers, let me see you more closely."

Hyla, blushing becomingly, did so. There is no resisting the mellowing appeal of sincere admiration.

"I was right the first time!" Uncle Cato announced jubilantly, as one who has made a discovery. "Mrs. Blithers is a dream! It hardly seems possible with a name like Blithers, but it is undoubtedly so. I begin to see now why it was that my nephew was distracted by her. Take my advice, Blithers, leave Mr. Wetherill's employ at once. You cannot risk such a treasure."

Mr. Dodd patted Hyla's hand affectionately. Finally, almost as one who commits a sacrilege, he transferred it to George Fitzgerald's palm.

"Take her, Blithers, and guard her well. She's more than you deserve, but the ministers certainly do make some awful mistakes these days. Vogt!"

"Yes, sir!" The secretary came out of a brown study.

"Give Mr. and Mrs. Blithers each five dollars for me."

"Yes, sir."

"Now, you two, kiss and make up." Cato Dodd had adopted a bullying tone with this pair, whom he imagined to belong to the servant class. "Kiss her, young man, or I'll do it myself!"

And George was going to do it. He already had his arm around Hyla, and was drawing her face toward his, when Fred yanked him away.

"Don't you dare!" muttered the outraged husband.

They stood for a moment glaring at each other.

"Pray, why not?" demanded Hyla coldly. Her husband turned to her.

"Why not?" he repeated. "Because—because—" He floundered for reasons.

"Yes, that's it, just 'because,'" his wife interrupted sarcastically. "You had better keep out of my affairs and go back to your peroxid friend."

"Peroxid!" Flora's voice joined the discussion with the rising inflection of a lady who has been stabbed with a hatpin.

"Flora!" George exclaimed in dismay.

"Are you going to stand there and hear me insulted?" Flora demanded of her *fiancé*—or, rather, of her *fiancé* that recently had been.

"Silence!" cried Cato Dodd ineffectually, stamping his foot. "Silence! Ouch!"

"Gentlemen!"

Another peace advocate came forward. Vogt placed soothing hands on the arms of Fred and George, who seemed about to spring at each other's throats. With one accord they brushed him aside. He struck solidly on a table containing a punch-bowl and a set of glasses. Result—scrambled glassware and Vogt.

"You can't do that, you know!" he protested, apparently insensible to the fact that they just had done it, and that even as he spoke he was sitting amid the rather sharp ruins. No self-respecting junkman in his right mind would have given a plugged quarter for the entire consignment of ruins, even with Vogt's clothing thrown in.

But no one paid any attention to what the secretary said, or to how he felt, which he presently discovered for himself. A counter-attraction claimed every eye and ear.

Something solid bumped against the house, and from below, out of sight somewhere, came a shrill, boyish voice.

"Is dis Mr. Cato Dodd's house?" it asked.

### XVIII

MRS. WETHERILL and Miss Kelly paused with hard, cold, deliberately unfriendly glances clashing in mid air. Mr. Wetherill and Mr. Fitzgerald withheld the fists about to flatten out juxtaposed noses. Mr. Cato Dodd paused with bandaged foot uplifted and his fifth repetition of the word "Silence!" unuttered. Altogether it was like flashing a "still" photograph in the midst of a motion-picture.

Hawkins went to the stairs to see what or who it might be, only to discover that the water had risen four or five steps higher since they came up, and that there was no possibility of going down again. Keeping this disquieting discovery to himself, he went to the window and opened it. There, peering over the edge of the roof, was the face

of a small boy, flanked on either side by a set of five fingers which clasped firmly the edge of the overhanging eaves.

"What do you want?" Hawkins used the justly feared tone with which he was wont to receive book-agents.

"Is dis Mr. Cato Dodd's house?" The boy repeated his question.

"It is."

"Is Mrs. Fred Wetherill here?"

"She is."

"I got a telegram for her. It's stickin' in me cap."

Hyla heard, and answered with a frightened scream.

"A telegram!" she said in a half moan.

"Oh, I know something dreadful has happened!"

"Nonsense," her husband soothed her. He had the masculine complacent and commercial attitude toward the Western Union which it is so difficult for most feminine minds to comprehend. "It probably isn't anything important."

"Oh, but I know it is! Mother is dying, or the house has burned up! Oh, dear, why did I ever come to this terrible place?" Hyla began to cry.

This conversation had taken place aside between the Wetherills. The others, intensely interested in the diversion outside, were clustered around the window.

"Bring the message to me," commanded Hawkins.

"How?" the boy demanded practically. "I'm standing on me toes now. If I tried to climb up on the roof, me skiff would drift away; and this is the only boat there is in the entire valley. I had a dickens of a time borryin' it to deliver this message with, and if I don't return it I'll get hail Columbia!"

The dormer-window was about eight feet from the eaves, where the boy's head posed as if it were transfixed on a pikestaff. That eight-foot gulf lay between the messenger and the safe delivery of his message.

"Let the kid read the message," suggested Flora practically, "and tell us what's in it."

"No, no!" Hyla protested with tears streaming down her face.

"Why not?"

"What affair is it of yours?" asked Mr. Dodd. "If Mrs. Wetherill doesn't mind, why should you care?"

"I can't read only a few words, anyhow,"

said the boy, thus putting an end to the discussion. "Unless it is something about a cat or a dog or a rat I couldn't tell what it is, 'cause I only just got started at night-school."

"It can't be about a cat or a dog or a rat," cried Hyla. "We don't own any pets. It's probably something about a funeral, or a morgue, or something like that."

"A tall, thin guy could get it," the plumber suggested, thoughtfully eying the distance from the dormer to the eaves. "A couple of us could hold on to his feet and let him down close enough to reach the kid's hat."

"Good!" declared Fred. "Mr. Vogt is just the man."

"I—er—beg to be excused," Vogt answered in mild protest.

"What for? You're just the man."

"Possibly, but my trousers suffered considerably from contact with the broken glass-ware from that table, and I should scarcely dare trust myself to do anything the least acrobatic, or at all apt to place an undue strain upon the—er—"

"I get you. I'll fix that!" Fred turned to address the spectators. "All ladies will kindly retire to the other end of the ball-room. Those who are not ladies may remain. Come on, Vogt, Blithers will take one foot, and I will grasp the other firmly. There is no danger."

Vogt protested, but he seemed to be unanimously elected, and finally he was induced to play the part of a human bridge as outlined in Fred's ingenious plan. It worked all right, too—that is, it worked as far as it went.

The long, lean secretary lay flat on his stomach and was gently slid head first down the shingles until he could reach the message tucked safely in the messenger-boy's hat. Clutching it firmly in one hand, he said:

"All right! Pull me back!"

Fred and George started to do so. Vogt was light and they were strong. It would have been child's play for them had the shingles only overlapped the other way. As it was, they took in about two inches of slack, and then their burden stuck, held fast by his vest, which was caught under a shingle.

"Don't pull too hard," Vogt admonished.

"Then let go."

"I'm not holding on to anything, I assure you, and I'm dreadfully anxious to get back. The blood is rushing to my head fearfully."

"And meeting with no opposition, I'll bet!" muttered George.

"I'm stuck somewhere," Vogt discovered.

"What shall I do?"

"Well," decided Fred, after surveying the situation, "unless you want to stay there all day, I should say that you'd better let us haul you in hand over hand, come what may."

"This is terribly embarrassing," declared Vogt; "but I can't remain longer in this undignified position."

"Shall we pull?"

"I suppose so."

"Let her rip!" ordered George as a signal.

And something did. Nothing visible gave way, but there was an unmistakable sound of tearing. However, they gained quite a lot before poor Vogt got stuck again.

"Here, take this telegram," suggested the secretary, articulating as well as possible, considering that his face was rubbing the wet shingles. "Then I can help you a little by raising up with both hands."

"I'll take it," said a feminine voice.

"You'll not take my telegram! Give it to me!" There was no mistaking the indignation in Hyla's voice.

The two women reached for the yellow envelope simultaneously. Both of them grabbed it. At the same time Vogt writhed with embarrassment, and Fred and George, overcome with astonishment at the appearance of the two women, failed to hold as firmly as they should. As a result, Vogt began to slip.

Fred and George clutched wildly to regain their firm grip, but in their anxiety they interfered with one another. Nothing was checking the secretary's downward progress but the yellow envelope, held by him at one end and the two ladies at the other. That was expecting too much of the paper stock used by the Western Union. It stood the strain for about one-tenth of a second, and then parted, leaving a ragged half in the possession of Hyla and Flora and the remainder clutched tightly in the fist of the agonized Vogt, who shot the chutes swiftly over the edge of the roof and down into the water below!

The suddenness of it was demoralizing. One moment the tangible if sketchy form of

the young man was stretched out on the roof, as if by the hand of some giant taxidermist; the next he had vanished, just as if he had been erased. The spectators stood frozen with horror.

It was owing to this temporary paralysis and aphasia of surprise that for a few seconds no move was made to rescue the young man. By the time any one in the attic was able to offer help, the rescue had been accomplished.

The small boy had seen what was coming, and had ducked down into his boat in time to escape the avalanche, which had passed over him harmlessly enough. Then, with rare presence of mind, he had rowed hastily to the spot where he suspected that the secretary would come up, and had helped him, sputtering, into the boat.

"Thank Heaven, he is saved!" murmured Hyla with relief.

"No thanks to you, that's a cinch," her husband declared. "I thought you agreed to stay at the other end of the ballroom."

"I got so anxious about my telegram," she explained simply. "I couldn't wait. Suppose that—oh, dear, what does it say?"

She snatched away the paper which she and Flora had been holding jointly.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" she cried, scanning the paper that fluttered in her trembling hands. "Look at this, Fred!"

She showed him the half-sheet of the telegram torn diagonally across. It contained the following words:

. . . expected to live.  
. . . home at once.

MOTHER.

"Father -- dying—I know it!" wailed Hyla, while every one else maintained the silence of respectful sympathy.

"Not necessarily." Fred schooled himself to a non-hysterical calm. "Don't jump at conclusions so, Hyla!"

"But it says 'expected to live,' and what always goes before that?" his wife demanded. "The word is always 'not,' isn't it? Somebody is not expected to live!"

"We don't know that it was anything like that. Besides, even if it is serious, it may not be about your immediate family. It may be a distant relative who is ill. Let's hear the whole telegram first. Where's the rest of this?"

"Mr. Vogt had it in his hand when he fell

off the roof." Flora supplied the desired information.

"Hey, Vogt!" Fred hailed. "Where's the rest of this telegram?"

Vogt opened his hand. It was empty.

"I had it," he said rather incoherently, because of his chattering teeth, "but I must have dropped it when I fell in."

"See if it's in your other hand. Look through your clothes."

These and other words of advice came from the various members of the interested group at the window.

"I haven't it," Vogt asserted definitely.

"How are you going to get back?" the plumber asked, anent nothing in particular.

"I can't. My clothing is in such shape that I am scarcely presentable," the secretary replied. "I'm not going to try. I am going to row over to a place where I can get dry clothes and some breakfast."

The plumber began to clamber out on the roof.

"Here, where are you going?" demanded George Fitzgerald, grabbing him by the seat of a convenient garment.

"I'm going to fall in, too."

"Not so that you could notice it, you're not! There's only room for one more in that skiff, and remember that the ladies and children have first choice. Flora, do you want to go?"

"I don't want to go," she gulped, "without my Freddy!"

"Very properly spoken," approved Uncle Cato. "That's the way a wife should feel."

"Absolute cat!" hissed Hyla.

"Do you want to go?" Fred suggested to his wife.

"And leave you here with her? I suppose you'd be only too glad to get rid of me."

"I'm f-f-freezing to d-d-death," chattered Vogt. "I'll send some one back with the boat when I get ashore."

He began pulling away.

"Good-by, dove," waved the plumber. "Hurry back to the ark, and bring back an olive-leaf and a couple of sandwiches to your old friend Noah!"

"And get another copy of this telegram," shouted Fred to the messenger-boy. "Get two copies of it, so that we can pull one apart, if necessary."

The boy nodded, to show that he understood. With anxious eyes the crew of the stone ship watched the secretary man the



oars. He worked vigorously, doubtless to warm himself up, and he pulled a strong stroke for one so slender.

With his back turned, Vogt did not see a large snag approaching with the current. The party at the window sensed the imminence of collision, and shouted at the top of their lungs. The man and the boy in the boat heard the yell, for the boy turned to listen, but neither of them seemed to understand what was said. In the next instant the snag struck, the boat overturned, and its occupants were floundering in the water.

Only for a moment, though, for almost immediately they were seen dragging themselves up by the gnarled protuberances of the giant tree which had proved their undoing.

Seated safely astride the trunk, they floated away out of sight, preceded by the crushed and waterlogged remains of the only boat in the valley.

# XIX

"Now he can never get back with that telegram!" stated Hyla, pacing up and down in an agony of suspense. "And father dead, and mother wondering why I don't come home!"

"It didn't say your father was dead," Fred pointed out reasonably. "Why not wait until—"

"He's probably dead by this time. Anyway, I know it's something dreadful. Mother never telegraphs except when something awful occurs. Oh dear, I should have gone in that boat!"

"If you had, look where you'd be now—out there afloat on an old tree headed for the ocean somewhere."

"But I'd be doing something!"

"You'd be hanging on for dear life."

"Don't hector me! Haven't I trouble enough without having you argue with me?"

"But, dear, if you'd be reasonable!"

"I won't!"

"That's what I thought."

"Go and tell that woman to be reasonable!"

She pointed scornfully at Flora, who was likewise pacing up and down, in a mixed mood composed of sorrow at the loss of her seal, anger at George Fitzgerald, whom she blamed for everything, and impatience at being marooned in the midst of a flood with

the time for her next vaudeville *matinée* approaching.

Flora heard part of Hyla's remark.

"I don't want your husband," she attempted to assure Mrs. Wetherill.

"You said you wouldn't leave without him," Hyla retorted with injured asperity.

"I said I couldn't go without Freddy, but Freddy is my pet seal."

"Huh!" An unladylike sniff. "I'll believe that when I see the seal!"

With that Hyla started for the other end of the room.

"Hyla!" Fred halted her with an exclamation half pleading, half admonitory.

"Don't Hyla me!" She swept by him.

"If you're a man, you'll get the rest of that telegram for me. Otherwise, don't speak to me!"

Fred started to follow her, but the look she gave him froze him helpless in his tracks. He stood transfixed while she went to the dormer-window and flung herself across the sill in an attitude of complete despair. The young husband turned imploringly to Flora.

"Do you suppose she will do anything rash?"

"Nothing rasher than cry her eyes out. I'll go and take care of her for you."

Flora also started for the more remote portion of the ballroom.

"Let me go with you, Flora," suggested Fitzgerald, aside, to his *ex-fiancée*.

"Not while I've got my health!" she retorted pointedly. "You go somewhere by yourself and think up another bright idea, like the one you had last night for getting me out here. Only this time think up something that will work the other way, and get me to New York, and that will bring back my thousand-dollar pet seal. Until then, good night!"

When she was gone, Fred and George exchanged glances. George shrugged his shoulders.

"If it was my idea to come out here last night, I'm never going to have another idea as long as I live!"

"Why should you make that announcement as if it was news to me?" his friend questioned, extracting from his pocket a small, damp, red volume and opening it at random.

"'It is better,' he read, 'to have the woman you love hate you than be indifferent

to you.' According to that, you stand pretty high, George!"

"Oh, dry up!" muttered George unfeelingly.

"This is good stuff," Fred went on with enthusiasm. "I wish I'd had this before I got married! If you've read this thing through, George, I don't see how you have managed to make such a mess of your love-affairs. It says here that 'love thrives on trust,' and what did you do? You got angry just because I kissed your sweetheart."

"Well, you weren't so tickled when I nearly kissed your wife!"

"Wives are different."

"I don't see why."

"Anyway, I hadn't read the book then. I didn't understand the theory of it the way you did."

"Quit your confounded—"

"'Never lose your temper,'" Fred read. "I wonder if this book was written by a man who had never seen a woman! 'Never lose your temper'! It ain't possible."

The two men were carrying on their sarcastic confidences in an undertone. Hawkins was busy clearing up the broken glass; the taxi-driver was ostentatiously winding the clock on his meter. Nora and her admirer crooned together almost inaudibly. Comparative quiet brooded over the party.

Comparative, I say, because there was one exception to the rule of silence. Uncle Cato Dodd was strangely stimulated to speech.

"Getting married is a good deal like tobogganing," he observed. "You don't really enjoy it until you've tried it a couple of times. I'd advise every man to get married at least four times. There really isn't any reason why it isn't quite possible, too, since Reno has been invented. I've never even had to bother to take the trip out there myself. My wives have always done it for me."

He chuckled reminiscently over the left-handed tribute to his amiability.

"If women weren't so stubborn, marriage would be happier," he rambled on. "Now Mrs. Dodd—the present Mrs. Dodd, I mean—is one of the loveliest of God's creatures, and we'd be the happiest couple alive if she wasn't so set in her ideas. She gets mad over nothing at all. Just because I threw that bucket of paint—" He paused to scowl malignantly at the offending mural decoration. "But I forgive her," he went on magnani-

mously. "Said she'd never cross my threshold again, and got unnecessarily mad about it, but I forgive her. God gave the women beauty, and I suppose it's too much to expect that He'd put brains in the same place. Maybe there weren't any left when he finished with the men."

Cato Dodd halted in his monologue to admire the point he had just made.

"That's the truest thing I've said! Boys, we've got brains and they've got beauty. If we remember that, everything will be all right. Treat 'em as if they didn't have anything to think with. I wish I'd thought of that sooner! It's too late for me, but you, Fred, and you, too, Blithers, can try it out." He beamed on his adopted disciples. "Ah, if only I could have one more wife!" With which pious wish the veteran philosopher sank into deep reverie.

Probably it was a more practical mind, or possibly a greater hunger, that prompted the taxi-driver to be the first one to try Pfefferblätter's Predigested Meal Wafers. Before any one noticed, he had opened the case and had consumed an entire bottle of them.

It was Fred who discovered him munching them.

"Try some of these," suggested the chauffeur with sudden friendliness. "They don't taste like anything, but if you eat enough of 'em they sort of fill you up."

"Enough of them?" echoed Fred. "Why, how many have you eaten?"

"I don't know—a hundred or so, I guess."

Fred was examining the printed label on the outside of a bottle.

"'Each tablet,'" he read, "'contains the food equivalent of a full meal.' Why, man alive, you've eaten enough to last you thirty-three days! You can't have another bite for over a month."

"Gosh!"

"'One wafer,'" Fred read on, "'has the same food value as three-quarters of a pound of steak, six ounces of potatoes, a dish of boiled onions, and a piece of apple pie.' According to this, you've eaten a quarter of beef, a bushel of potatoes, a bushel of onions, and twenty-five whole apple pies."

"I do feel kind of funny!"

"I should think you would! You must feel like an ostrich. I don't suppose any man in the world has ever had as many

proteids and carbohydrates in his system at one and the same time."

"Is it a poison?"

"What?"

"Pro-what-you-call-'ems and carbon hydrants."

"I don't know. Anyway, if I were you, I wouldn't take a drink of water until next month some time. If all that condensed food ever started to swell to its full size, good night!"

The chauffeur was so nervous about his condition that he forgot his taximeter clock and left it lying on the floor when he walked away. Fred thoughtfully kicked it into a corner, intending later, under cover of darkness, to tie it to something that would float and drop it out of the window for a voyage to the Atlantic Ocean.

Fred ate one or two of the predigested meals himself, and while there was no perceptible satisfaction in the process he felt that he had done all he could for his stomach under the circumstances. Not to deny the others any benefits which might accrue, he passed the tablets around. All suspended hostilities long enough to nibble them except Mr. Dodd.

That gentleman took one pellet between his thumb and forefinger and held it to the light.

"All I can say," he observed, "is that if that is the size of Pfefferblätter's stomach, and the rest of him is proportionate, he ain't safe in a summer breeze without an anchor out!"

He dropped it into the aquarium with Midas.

"Fish food, that's all it is," he said with a snort. "Fish food!"

The goldfish ate a little of the tablet, and then turned over on their backs, gasping.

"Look what it did to the fish!" Uncle Cato pointed out triumphantly. "Nearly killed 'em, that's what it did, and Mrs. Dodd wanted me to live on 'em exclusively. A Borgia, that's what she is. See those fish suffer!"

"And I've got a hundred of them things in me!" exclaimed the chauffeur in an awed tone. "Oh, oh, oh, what a terrible pain!"

"What has happened? What's the matter?" Questions and questioners crowded around the now doubled-up chauffeur.

"He has overeaten, that's all," Fred explained. "Took a hundred meals at once,

and they're distressing him a hundred times as much as one meal. It's nothing serious—compound dyspepsia and cramp colic, that's all."

"That's all?" echoed the sufferer between groans. "I wish you had it!"

"Thanks, old chap. I wouldn't deprive you for anything."

"Do you mean to tell me that my fish and that man got enough nourishment out of those tablets to make them sick?" inquired Cato with the skepticism of a trained investigator.

"They certainly did," Fred told him. "I don't suppose there is any better advertisement in the world for Pfefferblätter's Predigested Meal Wafers than our little friend who is now rolling over and over on the floor."

"Give me one," said the skeptic. "If it's as good as that, I'll try it."

Fred passed the pellets. Even Flora and Hyla each took one.

"Each tablet contains a porterhouse steak with French fried potatoes, vegetables, and dessert," he chanted. "Carry your dinner in your watch-pocket. Use Pfefferblätter's and never wash another dish. Does away with kitchens, cooks, and cabarets!"

"I can't eat," declared Hyla, casting away her partly dissolved tablet. "I must go to my mother. Fred, how can you stand there making jokes when for all you know my father may be dead?"

"Pardon me, dear, I didn't know you cared what I did or said. I don't believe it is as bad as you think."

"But the telegram said 'not expected to live,' and 'come home at once,'" Hyla repeated tearfully. "Can't some of you men think of some way to get me ashore? I must go!"

"I'll try it, lady," declared the plumber enthusiastically. "I've got an idea. We'll build a raft!"

"Out of what?" A practical question from George, *alias* Blithers.

"Furniture."

"What if Mr. Dodd won't let you?"

"I will, though," interrupted Mr. Dodd genially. "You can have all this stuff. I'll be glad to see the last of it."

The idea of doing something appealed strongly to the male contingent of the party of castaways. They turned cheerfully to the work of destroying the furniture and recon-

structing it into a raft. Even the chauffeur, after a while, recovered sufficiently to take an interest in what was going on.

Hawkins produced a long clothes-line which had been used on rainy days for drying the washing in the attic. This did good service in lashing things together.

In the middle of the day all hands except the chauffeur knocked off to consume another tablet; but the predigested marvels did not possess the flavor that their palates were ready for, and the meal was an artistic failure.

It was the middle of the afternoon before the raft was ready for launching. It was quite a substantial affair, and the men deserved a great deal of credit for the work they had done on it. The plumber, as the architect and chief builder, was especially jubilant over the craft.

"I wouldn't be surprised," he congratulated himself, "if it would hold the entire party. If I only had about a two-horse-power motor and a propeller, we could run across the Atlantic in it!"

The selection of the party caused some discussion, but at last it was decided that both Flora and Hyla should go, together with Fred and George. The others would remain until some sort of a rescue craft could be sent from the shore. At last it was all ready to try out. Flora broke a bottle of mineral water over it and christened it the Uncle Cato.

"Now, you hold the window open," the plumber instructed Hyla, "and all of us men will lift her up and shove her through. All right, boys!"

All together they lifted her up, but when it came to shoving her through there was a hitch. There was a difference of about six inches between the size of the raft and that of the window-opening. The difference was in favor of the raft.

They turned it around. It was longer the other way. They tried tilting it up on edge, but it was too thick.

"There is only one thing to do," decided the plumber at last, as he desisted and leaned against the window-sash, perspiring. "We got to make this window-hole bigger."

"With our finger-nails?" inquired George Fitzgerald sarcastically.

"I've got a knife," said the plumber.

"Well, by working all night you may be able to get it ready by morning. Wake me

up before you go, because I want to see you off."

The others were of like opinion, and they left the plumber alone, seated disconsolately on his argosy.

An hour or so later he came to his crew with a suggestion that they should rebuild the Uncle Cato, making it small enough to go through the window; but his idea met with scant enthusiasm. The novelty of carpentering had worn off, and besides, as some one pointed out, it would soon be too dark to work any longer.

It was in some such spirit that Columbus and Noah must have been received by their contemporaries.

## XX

THE building of the raft had several curious and unexpected consequences. One of them was that since practically all the furniture of the ballroom was incorporated in the floating monster, there was nothing left to sit down on except the floor. This made for informality and profanity, especially on the part of Uncle Cato, who refused to attempt to seat himself, preferring to stand on his gouty foot rather than risk the chance of getting so far down that he could not get up again.

His temper, which had not been improved by total abstinence from food and drink, was sand-papered to a fine edge by this new inconvenience. Some one offered him another wafer.

"No, I refuse to fool my digestive apparatus further. I'll starve honestly and die like a gentleman!" He closed his eyes petulantly and groaned. "No food, no drink, and now not even a place to sit down! Mrs. Dodd, you have had your revenge. I've got to starve to death standing up. Oh, oh!"

It was an inopportune moment for Augustus to plant a noisy kiss upon Nora's features.

"What was that?" Cato Dodd demanded suddenly.

"What was what, sir?" Hawkins inquired with his customary respect.

"It sounded like some one pulling a cork." Uncle Cato still kept his eyes closed and whined in a petulant monotone.

"It was Cook, sir."

"Cook! Oh, why must I be tortured so? Don't let me see her! Don't let me see her! The idea of saving the cook! Who was the



bright person who thought of that? What was the use? I suppose you did it just to spite me. Why didn't somebody use his brains and save something to eat? Who wants a cook? Tell her to keep away. I suppose this is part of the plot to drive me into a rage so that I'll die sooner. Did Mrs. Dodd save that cook? It's just like her. Anything to annoy a dying man! I never want to see another cook as long as I live. Send her away! Send her back to Mrs. Dodd!"

"Do you mean that?" Nora bridled truculently. "If you do, I'll be leaving to-day, that's what, and then you'll see how easy it is to get a good cook to come out and live in this cranky, crazy old house!"

"That will do, cook." Mr. Dodd spoke with menacing calm. "Go at once. Get out of my sight!"

"I will!"

She marched to the far end of the room. Augustus Johnson followed her with adoring eyes, but she had forgotten him. Moved by pity for the poor, unoffending woman, Fred Wetherill went after her.

"He doesn't mean anything," he told her, in an attempt to soothe her ruffled pride.

"Mean it or not, he said it, and I'm leaving."

"How will you go with all this water around?"

"I don't know, but I'll leave him flat, if I have to swim! Believe me, a good cook like myself don't stay in the same house with an old crank like that. Let him whistle for his dinner, I say!"

And she meant it, too. In spite of Fred's protests she clambered out through the dormer-window upon the roof of the sleeping-porch, which joined the main roof at that point. It was fairly flat and solid, and was now only a foot or so above the level of the water. A person standing on it had an excellent view of the flooded district. Directly in front was the head of the valley, whence everything was coming, water, wreckage, and mud. The porch acted as a sort of a prow. The stream divided and passed on either side.

"Glory be, what's this comin'?" Nora asked, partly of Fred and partly of the powers that be. She did not seem to expect an answer. "It's a house," she went on, "or, anyhow, the roof of one. There's people on it, poor souls!"

Interested in spite of himself, Fred leaned out of the window. Nora was right. There was a larger bit of wreckage than usual bearing down upon them. It was a curious-looking house, if house it was, and had a most unusual sort of roof. It was flat, and had a parapet all around it, with flagpoles at each of the corners. From these poles outlandish pennants floated in vivid and contrasting colors.

As the floating building drew nearer, it could be seen that a mauve-colored awning with wide magenta stripes stretched from the flagpoles also, and that this awning covered a sort of roof-garden, with potted trees of unheard-of colors arranged about it grotesquely. In or on this roof-garden, in wicker chairs, sat a man and a woman.

The floating wreckage drew nearer rapidly. It was headed directly toward the Dodd house. Even as Fred was speculating whether the current would carry it to the right or to the left, it struck the outer edge of the sleeping-porch with a sickening thud. A shiver ran through the entire building, glass tinkled musically, and then the floating roof slowly steadied and hung, braced firmly against the porch. Nora, who stood on the roof of the porch, promptly climbed the parapet of the new arrival. She had made good on her threat to leave Cato Dodd flat.

## XXI

"MRS. MYRA LIGHTFOOT DODD!" said a voice at Fred's elbow.

"Yes, Mr. Cato Dodd," said the lady on the roof.

She was a personable woman of thirty, beautifully gowned, and apparently unexcited by the abrupt termination of her voyage. Cato Dodd continued speaking.

"What is that confounded pink-and-purple cow-shed that you call a house doing in my front yard?"

"It isn't a confounded pink-and-purple cow-shed, although I am glad to know what you think of it. I built it rather in the hope of getting an expression of opinion from you; but I had no intention of moving it into your front yard. I had no idea of moving at all, in fact, but the flood knocked the foundation out from under it, and I had to come along or drown. How is your gout?"

"Hang my gout! Take that thing out of my sight!"

"I can't do it. Your old-fashioned imi-

tation Tudor house is in the way. Move it over a few feet so that I can get by, and I'll be only too glad to find a more artistic location."

"The idea of moving into my front yard this way! Ouch!"

"Stamped your foot, didn't you?" Mrs. Dodd deduced in a detached sort of way. "If you would cut out rich foods and eat Pfefferblätter's Predigested Meal Wafers—"

"Madam, are you interested in this Pfefferblätter person? Have you any money invested in his nefarious enterprises, or is your interest purely sentimental?"

"I was about to say," the lady went on, unruffled, "that your gout could be cured by simple food, such as I mentioned, and by abstaining from all alcoholic beverages for—"

"How can I abstain from alcoholic beverages? How would it look for the proprietor of Dodd's Malt Whisky to be a total abstainer? What kind of an advertisement would that be?"

"I only wished to help you. If you care to be cured, plenty of water will do it."

"What do you think I am—a dodgasted fish? I couldn't have any more water than there is now, and I feel mighty bad. There's enough water in this house to drown the entire Prohibition party, and I'm dying. I hope you're satisfied! If you turned this flood on just for me, why, revel in your success. Enjoy the mortal agonies of Cato Dodd. Put on my tombstone, 'He is not dead, but diluted.'"

Mrs. Dodd laughed. It was a clear, delicious laugh of genuine amusement—not unkind, but irrepressible.

"Oh, Cato, that's the first time I've laughed in weeks. I've been so blue! No one is quite so amusing as you are."

"Oh, I'm amusing, am I? That's what you married me for, I suppose—so that you could have a good laugh before breakfast by watching my daily struggle with death. You ought to have been a Spanish woman. You'd get a lot of pleasure out of a bullfight. I'll bet you'd laugh yourself sick in the incurable ward of a charity hospital. Bah!"

The gentleman of the house turned away, and shouted to his butler:

"Hawkins, get some tools and pry this thing off our front porch!"

Having delivered this order, Mr. Dodd

once more looked out of the window at his legally wedded wife, as if he were going to start another oration; but he thought better of it and stamped away to the other end of the ballroom.

For a fleeting instant Mrs. Dodd looked with melting eyes at the departing figure of her lord and master. Then her glance returned to Fred, who was keeping a discreet silence. She smiled at him engagingly.

"I'm sorry I worked him up into such a rage. You'll be the ones to suffer."

"Isn't he really ill?"

"Not any more so than you are. He disregards all the common-sense rules about eating and drinking, and then yells because the result gets tangled up in his system. He claims he can eat and drink a lot of things because his father could; but he forgets that his father was an active man who worked with his hands out of doors all the time. Your uncle would be a very amiable man if he would only do as I tell him; but he prefers to live back in the dark ages somewhere, and never listens to the voice of progress. Pardon me for lecturing!"

Fred's attention had wavered from what Mrs. Dodd was saying to stray over the visible portions of the lady's house. The façade, from which he was separated only by the width of the roof of the sleeping-porch, was unlike that of any other building he had ever set his eyes upon. There were strange colors in it, and curious designs that seemed to pride themselves upon having no relation to one another or to the science of geometry. A scroll that started out to be a green parabola became suddenly a purple triangle. It was very trying to the eyes and to the soul.

The lady across the way followed his strained gaze.

"You are a stranger, I see," she said.

"I can tell that you have never seen my house before. It's rather extreme, isn't it?"

"It is—well, I suppose it is sort of ultra," Fred faltered.

"I thought you had that kind of a look in your eye. Well, this is a modern house, not an imitation castle, like that thing you are in. By the way, who are you, young man?"

"Frederick Wetherill," he replied promptly, as if his interrogator were a school-teacher whom he was meeting for the first time.

"Frederick Wetherill!" she repeated. "I've heard the name. In fact, I believe you're my nephew. I'm glad to meet you, nephew, although I presume you will be no relation of mine as soon as the divorce-court gets around to it. Won't you come over and call?"

"Come and call?"

"Yes, and bring your wife. You have a wife, haven't you? It seems to me I heard of your being married."

"Oh, yes," Fred admitted readily. He beckoned to Hyla, who was being comforted on the shoulder of Flora Cora Kelly. Both girls stepped to the window. "Mrs. Dodd," he said, as a formal introduction "I wish to present Mrs. Wetherill to you."

"I am very glad to know you!"

Both girls made the formal acknowledgment together, and then each turned to look at the other. Mrs. Dodd laughed.

"Which one is Mrs. Wetherill?"

"Why, I am!" Flora and Hyla declared simultaneously.

"I congratulate you, nephew," Mrs. Dodd assured the young man with mock seriousness. "You are probably the only man in this country who could get away with two such good-looking ones!"

Hyla and Flora were covered with confusion, and each started to disclaim any tie that bound them to the embarrassed Fred.

"Never mind, girls," Mrs. Dodd told them engagingly. "It is difficult nowadays to tell whom you are married to. I don't know just where I stand myself. Won't both of you come over to tea?"

"When?"

"Right now."

The girls accepted with unseemly haste. Scorning Fred's assistance, they scrambled out of the window and across the Bridge of Sighs to the other building. When they had been helped over the parapet, Mrs. Dodd called back to Fred:

"I wish you would thank Mr. Dodd for sending Nora over. My cook and most of my servants went out last night before the flood, and I don't know what I should have done if he hadn't sent Nora to me!"

She had raised her voice. Cato Dodd, at the other end of the ballroom, heard and groaned.

"Shut that window!" he commanded weakly. "Shut it tight. Don't let her do anything more to hasten my death!"

The window was duly dropped into place; but the glass by no means cut off the interest of the other members of the party gathered in that end of the ballroom. Fred Wetherill and Augustus Johnson were especially intrigued by the doings on the roof of the suddenly added wing of the house. The latter viewed Nora's defection with alarm. How could he know that she had merely exercised her time-honored privilege of leaving a household "flat"?

Mrs. Dodd introduced Hyla and Flora to the young man who had been the only other occupant of the roof on its trip from the other end of the valley. He was a small, thin, youngish man, who wore his hair bobbed more or less like Mrs. Castle's, and who affected a long coat and a startling necktie.

"Good Heavens, who is that lizard?" demanded Fred.

"That is Mr. Saint Gawkins," the butler volunteered.

"The artist?"

"He says so, sir," replied Hawkins discreetly.

"The one who painted this mural decoration?"

"Yes, sir. He designed Mrs. Dodd's house, too, I understand, and he has been directing the furnishing and color schemes. She is very fond of his work."

Mr. Saint Gawkins, totally unconscious of the espionage from the juxtaposed window, was fluttering from one of the ladies to the other, exchanging what must have been very entertaining remarks. At any rate, the women laughed gaily at what he appeared to be saying. He had a habit, when he addressed a woman, of taking her hand and holding it in both of his, or of putting his palm under her chin and tilting her head at a different angle from the one at which it happened to be. Then he would stand off with clasped hands and admire the effect. He did that to Mrs. Wetherill.

"This is too much!" groaned Fred. "To think that a wife of mine would stand for anything like that!"

He turned away from the window with a snort of disgust. George laughed at him.

"See the thirty-seventh page of the 'Marriage Compendium,'" he suggested.

Fred turned on him.

"What do I care about your old book? I want my wife's love back! I can't live

without it. Will it soothe my aching heart if I eat the whole 'Marriage Compendium'?"

"See!" George pointed out. "You don't give this system a chance. You refuse to act sensibly in a crisis. You're as bad as a woman. You use your heart instead of your head!"

"Huh! I suppose you're a conspicuous example of what a successful lover ought to be." Fred surveyed his disconsolate-looking friend with a scornful glance. "Theories do not cut much ice after you're married. A man's place is by his wife's side, and I'm going over there to protect her from this reptilian villain in spite of all the books that have ever been written on any subject in the world!"

"But you haven't been invited to tea," George pointed out.

"Perhaps not to tea," Fred countered; "but I was asked to call, and no one can object if I choose to pay my respects now."

"I guess I'll go along, then."

"But you can't!"

"Why can't I?" George demanded truculently. "You're not going to try to stop me, are you?"

"Not me, not at all," Fred assured him. "But how can you explain your presence over there? You're not exactly a sight for sore eyes as you stand."

"I wish I had my overcoat!" George moaned. "With that on over my other clothes I could go anywhere."

"You're talking!" Fred agreed. "All doors would be open for you—going out!"

"I left it down-stairs in the flood. I wonder if the colors will come out!"

"They wouldn't dare!"

Fred started to open the window.

"If I can't go, you can't," George Fitzgerald insisted.

"Why not?"

"Because I won't stand for it, for one thing."

"Now, see here, Blithers!"

"For Heaven's sake, don't call me Blithers when no one is listening!"

"But it comes so natural! You look like a Blithers," Fred said regretfully. "If only your knee-breeches were pressed, and you had on a white wig, you'd look like the Supreme Lord High Blithers of the Ancient and Honorable Order of Blitherses. George, you're a born Blithers!"

"Don't try to distract my attention while you make your escape. I'm on to you. Put that other foot back in the boat before I remove your mainspring!"

"Now, look here!" exclaimed Fred. "You've argued with me until it's too late!"

"Too late for what?"

"To get across to Mrs. Dodd's house. Look!"

George looked.

The flood had risen another notch, and was now sweeping across the roof of the sleeping-porch, which was holding the two buildings apart. The water was not very deep yet at the end next to the building they were in; but the roof sloped outwardly, and at the other end, against which the floating house was lodged, the swirling torrent was already waist-high. Mrs. Dodd's house, being afloat, had risen with the water, and the parapet was now too high to be climbed by a person standing on the porch-roof below.

"Good Heavens, we can't reach the girls!" George exclaimed, after he had measured the distances with his eye.

"I hope you're satisfied," Fred reproached. "But for you, I'd be by my wife's side!"

"Or Flora's," George pointed out.

"What do you care, anyway? The engagement is broken."

"Whose fault is that?"

"Yours, of course. You had the original idea of coming out here."

"Good Heavens, why blame me for everything? You'll be saying I broke the dam, next!"

"Oh, Mr. Wetherill!"

The hail came from the roof of the other house. Fred promptly dropped his discussion with his friend.

"What is it?" he inquired of Flora, who stood at the edge of the parapet.

"Your wife is crying," she informed him cautiously. "What shall we do about it?"

"Crying? I don't know."

"What do you usually do?"

"Give her whatever she wants."

"See page 26 of the 'Marriage Compendium,'" suggested George from the background.

"Wait!" Fred commanded, while he fished the little red book out of his pocket. "I'll tell you in a minute." He consulted page 26, as per the advice of his friend, and read



loudly: "Tears cost a woman less and a man more than anything else he has to pay for. Next time your wife cries, don't notice it. It will make her so mad that she'll have to stop. Then buy yourself a new hat; you probably need one more than she does." That doesn't seem to hit the case exactly," he added. "What is she crying about?"

"She wants to go home to her mother."

"There's no accounting for tastes!"

"Fred!" Hyla's tearful voice entered into the controversy. "How can you joke when father is dying?"

"But you don't know that. Perhaps the doctor was wrong, and perhaps that telegram was about something else entirely."

"O-oh, but I want to go home!"

"I know, dear, but you mustn't cry."

"With father dying, and you in love with another woman, do you wonder that I cry?" Hyla paused in her sobs to ask.

"But, confound it, I don't love another woman!"

"Is that the way to say it? How can I believe you when you speak as if you were angry, Freddy dear? Oh, I'm so miserable!"

"Never mind, sweetest," he cooed, dropping uncertainly into the language of lovers.

"Freddy loves his own precious darling!"

"Do you, lover boy?"

"Uh-huh!"

"How much?"

"More than all the great big oceans put together, honeybunch!"

"Honest?"

"Cross my little old wabby heart, sweet-ums!"

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Cato Dodd, turning around. He had been able to hear only the husband's side of the conversation.

"I can't stand this on an empty stomach. Somebody find me a medium-sized flat-iron! I haven't strength enough to throw a heavy one accurately."

The invalid got up from the raft, where he had finally managed to seat himself, and, saying "Ouch!" at every step, hobbled the length of the room to the other window.

"Was it you making those cat-noises?" he inquired of his nephew. "If it was, your mother was no sister of mine. Nothing like that belongs in my family!"

"But, Uncle Cato—"

"No one who uses mush for language can call me uncle!"

"Freddy dear, I'm so lonesome for you!"

Hyla, across the intervening space of water, had noticed the cessation of her husband's endearments, and now claimed his attention once more.

"Here, here!" said a new voice. "What are you doing, child? Not talking like that to your husband? You said you hated him."

Mrs. Myra Lightfoot Dodd joined her guest and fellow flood-sufferer at the edge of the roof and endeavored to draw Hyla away from her tearful contemplation of her husband.

"But I don't. I love him so!"

"Hush! Don't ever let him know that. Be modern! You have your own rights as well as he has his. Show your independence!"

"Mrs. Dodd," said Mr. Dodd firmly, but with restrained passion quivering in his voice, "will you please tell me what affair it is of yours what passes between my nephew and his wife? Young woman, don't you take her advice! She has made a mess of her own marriage, and you had best be careful or she'll ruin yours, too. Look up at me, my dear, and let me see by your eyes if you really love him. Why, bless my soul, you're not his wife! You're Mrs. Blithers! You hussy, to flirt with him before every one!"

"Of course she's his wife," Mrs. Dodd asserted. "Cato, you're a fool!"

"His wife is that other girl over—" Mr. Dodd's eyes roved in search of Flora, but fell, in passing, upon the supple shape of Saint Gawkins, who was lolling at graceful length on a divan and holding Flora's hand.

"What in the name of imbecility is that?"

"What?"—an innocent question from his wife.

"That thing with trousers on!"

"Oh, that's Mr. Saint Gawkins, the artist who paints mural decorations."

"Is he the fellow who painted this?" Cato Dodd jerked his thumb back toward the ballroom.

"Yes. Would you like to meet him?"

"Yes, but not until after dark some time. Do you mean to say that he has the unmitigated nerve to be in your house and hold Mrs. Wetherill's hand before her husband's very eyes?"

"Oh, that's nothing! That's just his way."

"Sure!" echoed George Fitzgerald, who was standing out of range of the window, on the other side of Fred. "Don't you care,

Fred! It's just his way. He doesn't mean anything by it." He came over lazily and looked out of the window. "He doesn't—why, what's that? The deuce! It's Flora's hand he's holding!"

"Of course, but it's all right, because he doesn't mean anything by it," Fred assured his friend earnestly.

"I'll show him if it's all right! Gad, if I could only swim!"

George rolled up his sleeves and gazed helplessly at the water.

"All I have to say," resumed Cato Dodd, "is that it is not respectable for that man to be with you women without a chaperon."

"Why not? Two of us are married," returned Myra.

"That's just the idea. These Bohemians prefer married women. I insist that you must ask him to leave."

"How?"

"I don't care how."

"Hadn't you noticed the water?"

"Yes, but probably he's one of these confounded teetotalers, and he'll like it."

"Don't be ridiculous, Cato!"

"I'm not being ridiculous. Either that man leaves or I'll—"

"What will you do?" Mrs. Dodd asked impudently, as he paused.

"That man's being there isn't decent! I don't approve."

"You have nothing to say about what I do," Mrs. Dodd pointed out with a shrug.

"You're mistaken! I'm a member of a respectable community, and I do not intend to stand by and see the conventions outraged in this manner."

"Why, Cato, I believe you're jealous!"

"Jealous!" he shouted, his already outraged vanity stung to the quick by this quivering barb. "Ye gods, jealous! Jealous of that animated string-bean! Madam, I assure you that you are nothing to me."

"Good!" she acquiesced cheerfully. "And you are less than nothing to me—less than a couple of nothings, in fact; so that no matter what either one of us does it is no affair of the other."

She turned away with an expressive movement of the shoulder.

"Myra," he began with a new note in his voice, almost a note of pleading. "Perhaps I—"

"Tea is served, ma'am," said Nora to her newly adopted mistress.

"You'll excuse me, won't you," Mrs. Dodd flung over her shoulder to her husband, "at least until after we have had something to eat?"

## XXII

It had grown dark quite rapidly. The candles that Nora had lighted on the tea-table cast a very pleasant and appetizing glow over the food she had placed thereon. For this tea was no mere affair of wafers and hot beverage. On the contrary, it was tea as the word is understood in the country, where it takes the place of the evening meal.

There were hot biscuits, and cold meat, and potatoes hashed in cream, and globes of red, translucent jelly, with a dainty fruit salad and hot tea and coffee with thick cream. The men in the ballroom, grouped indistinctly in the unlighted window, noted each item of the menu with quivering interest.

"Who would ever have dreamed that mere biscuits on a plate could make such a wonderful picture?" asked Fred. "Why do artists ever bother with landscapes or portraits when models like that exist in every kitchen?"

"Fred," said his uncle with sudden decision, "are we going to stand by quietly and see that microbe with trousers on flirt with our wives and eat that food without turning over our hands to stop it?"

"What can we do?"

"We must do something. I can't stand this! I don't so much mind having the women folks eat, but to think that the dauber who perpetrated that blot on my walls should stuff himself while we perish for lack of nourishment is more than human nature can endure!"

"I wonder," mused the plumber speculatively, "if I ain't got a kind of an idea for transferring that guy from there to here without his hardly knowing it!"

"I suppose you're going to float him over here on your raft?" suggested Fred sarcastically.

"Nope," replied the ingenious mechanic, who either did not notice the slur or was too busy with his new scheme to have time to get offended. "I'll get him, though. Wait!"

"If you do, I'll give you five hundred dollars for him, dead or alive," Cato Dodd

offered enthusiastically. "I just need him to complete a collection of rare bugs I'm making!"

"Now you make it impossible for me to fall down," the plumber declared. "For five hundred dollars I'll get him, or my name ain't Julius Jeremiah Nufer!"

"Is your name Julius Jeremiah Nufer?" inquired Fred with some astonishment.

"I ain't telling," the plumber responded cautiously. "If that was your name, would you admit it or not?"

Cato Dodd was full of enthusiasm. For the first time in his life he began to look upon a plumber as a human being and a brother.

"You think you can do it?" he asked anxiously.

"Get your money ready," the plumber assured him, measuring with his eye the distance between the two houses. "It will have to be the first crack out of the box, though, or he'll suspicion something."

Thoughtfully he began to remove the clothes-line lashing from the good ship Uncle Cato, carefully smoothing out all the knots as he went along. It was too dark to see, and as there was no other available illumination it became necessary to light a fire in the grate for him to work by. But he untangled the line rapidly and deftly, and the meal across the way had not progressed very far before he had all the rope coiled and running free to a noose at one end.

Fortunately Saint Gawkins was sitting with his back to the point of attack. Also, he was busy. He was putting away hot biscuits and jelly and meat and potatoes like a Wyoming ranch-hand. That made it a greater pleasure to contemplate his fate—that and the fact that from time to time he would lean over and pat the hand of the lady next to him on either side.

"Whatever he gets, it belongs to him!" Cato Dodd decided, as the plumber swung out of the window to the sloping roof and worked his way down to the eaves. His feet were in the water, but he had a free swing to his arm, and he twirled the noose gracefully over his head.

"Swish, swish, swish!"—three times above his head, and he let go.

All was peaceful and gay on the other roof. The soft lights made the animated faces of the women more beautiful, if pos-

sible; happy chatter was being bandied back and forth. It was a pleasant picture.

Then suddenly out of the night something struck. There was a sound as of a gentle impact. All the ladies looked around to see what the missile was, and then, when they turned to speak to Mr. Saint Gawkins about it, they faced an empty place at the table.

Well, not quite an empty place, because over the plate above which Mr. Saint Gawkins's face had been bent there now rested Mr. Saint Gawkins's hair—not all of it, but the top part, quite enough to cover the plate completely. Possibly, when you were younger, you may have tried the interesting experiment of piling two checkers one on top of the other, and then shooting the lower one out from under with a third checker snapped across the board. It was an application of the same principle that accounted for the way in which Mr. Saint Gawkins disappeared from under his hair. The effect was as startling as if there had been a trap-door beneath the artist's plate and he had suddenly been dropped down through it.

For a moment the ladies stared at the hirsute memento. Then, giving up the idea that the little man was still under it, they looked around to see what had really become of him. They were in time to see him being drawn swiftly through the water at the end of a rope and helped by many willing hands through the yawning window across the way.

"Welcome, little stranger!" murmured the plumber as, with the others, he helped the artist to clamber over the window-sill.

"Where did you learn to throw a rope like that?" Fred inquired admiringly.

"It's easy!" Plumber Nufer shrugged his shoulders modestly. "I used to travel with a Wild West show, just doing that. This rope ain't quite heavy enough for accurate work, or I'd show you my complete act!"

"I must go back!" stated Chapman Saint Gawkins. "You can't make me stay here. It's an outrage! In the middle of a biscuit you yank me away. It is rude! It is not polite to the ladies! I must return."

"All right, son," the plumber answered him. "Go ahead!"

"You must take me back!"

"I'm sorry, but the moving sidewalk don't work both ways. If you want to go over there, you'll have to swim."

"Good Heavens, what shall I do?"

"Just keep your hair on!"

It was an inadvertent remark, but it reminded the artist of the way in which his locks were tethered, and he involuntarily reached up to touch them. His fingers touched his furless poll.

"My toupee!" he almost screamed. "My toupee! It's gone! Never can I face those ladies again! Who has it? Who has dared to remove my toupee from my head?" He stamped his foot imperiously.

"What's that over there on the table?" asked Mr. Dodd curiously. "Look, Nora is taking it away."

"It's the guy's scalp-lock," surmised the plumber correctly. "Wonder what she's going to do with it!"

They were not left long in doubt. Nora picked it up gingerly by a single strand of hair and carried it, twisting grotesquely, from the table. Still holding it at arm's length, as if it were a huge spider, which in truth it did resemble, she marched to the edge of the parapet and dropped it over.

A scream of anguish attested that Saint Gawkins had witnessed these last sad rites.

"My toupee!" he groaned. "It is gone!"

Miserably he made his way to the fire, to warm himself and to dry out his clothing. Fred, out of a kind heart, stimulated the blaze by adding a few pieces of broken furniture from the raft. There was no other fuel.

Even Cato Dodd took compassion on the morose figure of the artist. His head was bent as he squatted by the fire, and the red glare of the flames reflected from his polished head.

"Cheer up!" said Cato. "You haven't lost much—only your hair. You can buy more."

"That isn't it. They've seen me this way, and I look just like everybody else. I might be a business man like yourself, even. My reputation, which I have built up so carefully, is ruined. Would any one take me for a futurist now?" he demanded vehemently. "No! I look like what I really am—a miserable sign-painter!"

"A sign-painter?"

"Yes. I used to work for the Cable Advertising Company. My real name is Ben Ferguson."

"The Cable Company handle almost all my advertising," mused Cato Dodd, who,

in spite of himself, was warming to his new guest.

"I know it. I suppose I've painted your trade-mark, 'After the Bath,' on half the barns in the United States."

"You have? Could you paint it again from memory?"

"Could I? I could paint that picture with my eyes shut and one hand tied behind me so that you would swear that Svenjorgenson himself had done it. I guess I paint it better than Svenjorgenson did. I ought to—I've done it oftener!"

"And yet you would descend to painting a monstrosity like this?" Cato Dodd thundered with righteous indignation, swinging an accusing arm in the direction of the huge mural decoration, which was now only faintly visible in the flickering firelight.

The artist laughed.

"It's easier to do, and there's more money in it. People nowadays won't pay a high price for anything they can understand. I'm the most mysterious painter of the day—or was until I lost my toupee—and I got the highest prices. It's just business, that's all."

"How much will you take to quit and go back to painting 'After the Bath'?"

Mr. Saint Gawkins—or Ferguson—thought for a moment. "Would you pay six thousand dollars a year?" he asked timidly.

"I will," declared the magnate. "From now on you are engaged in a reputable business. There is only one condition—you will tell Mrs. Dodd what you have just told me, and also inform her of your intention to renounce your life of shame."

"I'll agree."

"Good! I guess that will put the rollers under Mrs. Dodd!" Her husband rubbed his hands gleefully, and then, suddenly, his joy subsided in a wistful sigh. "I wonder," he mused, "if she'd be willing to come back when she finds out! I believe I'll talk it over with her."

Deep in this resolution, Mr. Dodd walked to the window. His purpose was to hail his wife and hold parley with her. But the soft-shaded, twinkling candles which had formerly illuminated the tea-table were no longer brightening the darkness. There was nothing but Stygian gloom ahead of him.

Could it be that a wind had come up and blown them out? But no, there was



scarcely a breeze. Then perhaps it was raining? Mr. Dodd held out his hand into the open air to see.

Almost as if in answer to his query to the elements, the moon burst from behind a low-lying cloud-bank in the east, and stage-lit the scene with clear, mellow radiance. From the window at which Cato Dodd stood there was an unobstructed view of silent, muddy water eddying in a great swirl where the end of the porch, below the surface, created an obstruction, but otherwise proceeding unruffled about its mighty business.

"Come here, Fred, everybody! Look! The other house is gone!"

### XXIII

LIKE King Arthur's sword Excalibur, Mrs. Dodd's residence had disappeared into the mere. It was as completely gone as if a white-shrouded arm had reached up and dragged it beneath the surface.

"Good Lord!" Fred exclaimed breathlessly, as the full force of it struck him. "Hyla's drowned! Perhaps even now she is struggling in the water out there!" He began to take off his coat.

"Wait!" insisted George Fitzgerald. "Can you swim?"

"No, but—"

"Then don't be a fool! You can't go. I'll hold you if you try it; so you may as well quiet down, and let's try to think of something practical. Be calm!"

"It's easy enough for you to say 'Be calm!' Flora can swim like a fish."

"Myra! Myra!" called Cato Dodd out over the water. "Myra, where are you?"

"Oh-ai-ee!" Augustus Johnson, without knowing quite what it was all about, joined in with his lusty young bellow. If there was any noisy grief going on, he wanted to be in on it.

In spite of George's remonstrances, both Fred and his uncle were preparing to plunge off the roof when a hail from the other window halted them temporarily.

"Sail ho!" said the voice of the plumber. "Two points off our stern."

"What is it? What do you see?" demanded the others, as they crowded around. "Is it the other house?"

It was. The lighted candles on the table proved that. Serenely afloat, the roof was about fifty yards away, having passed to the

west of the Dodd house. Some freak of the current had dislodged it from its anchorage on the sleeping-porch and had swung it to one side, to be started once more on its perilous journey.

Slowly but inexorably it was being drawn away.

"Hyla! Myra! Flora! Nora!" the men yelled in unison.

It made a fine explosion of sound. Almost any first-class American university would have been glad to have it for a college yell. The four men would have been a great bunch of rooters at a football game, especially the Swede, who was extraordinarily gifted in the matter of vocal organs and chest development.

The women on the roof, thus hailed, ran to the edge of the parapet, thereby tipping their vessel precariously. They held out their hands, and seemed to be saying something, but the men in the ballroom failed to hear it.

"Come back! I love you!" shouted Cato Dodd at the top of his voice.

The idea was so good that all the others adopted it, and all together they chanted loudly:

"I love you! I love you!"

Probably sentiment and longing were never proclaimed more loudly since the world began.

When they stopped a faint shout floated back:

"I love you!"

"Was that an echo?" demanded Mr. Dodd. "Or was it my wife?"

"It was Flora, I think," declared George.

"No, it was Hyla," asserted Fred.

"You're mistaken—if it was my wife," shouted Uncle Cato.

"It was mine!" cried Fred, still more positively.

"No, it was mine!" This last from George.

"But you haven't any wife," Fred protested.

"Yes, he has," argued Mr. Dodd.

"Ahoy the house!"

A loud hail came from the other window. Naturally all looked around, to find Mr. Vogt's head inserted in the aperture. That was all—just his head. The secretary's means of support were not visible. Impelled by curiosity, every one hastened toward him to see how he got there.

The explanation was simple. He was standing in a clumsy, wide, flat-bottomed boat.

"I've come to take you ashore," he said.

"Where did you get the boat?" The plumber was the only man unexcited enough to ask the question.

"I had it built out of rough lumber just as soon as I got ashore. That log we were on grounded half-way down the valley. This craft leaks like a sieve, but it's big enough to carry us all, and I've got a motor attached to the stern which propels it quite slowly but surely."

"Never mind the explanations," cut in Cato Dodd. "We're going after Mrs. Dodd!"

"Mrs. Dodd?" inquired Mr. Vogt blankly. "Where is Mrs. Dodd?"

"I'll explain later. Help me into your boat. O-oh, it's wet, isn't it?"

"I'm going, too," declared Fred.

"And I," George added. The so-called Blithers had frankly abandoned his attempt at a cockney accent, and in the excitement no one had noticed it.

"All right, come ahead!" Cato Dodd acquiesced. "But no more. As it is, we've scarcely room for the four women."

All this must have been highly mystifying to the secretary, but he was too busy starting his motor to ask any further questions.

After some trifling delay the relief expedition got under way. Following his employer's directions, Skipper Vogt steered his sluggish craft around the house.

Then began a long, stern chase. Mrs. Dodd's house was now half a mile away, and Vogt's caravel was no speed boat at best. Still, it went faster than the house could float, and they soon made a perceptible gain.

"We've got to overtake that house before she strikes the lower dam," Cato Dodd mused aloud. "If she hits, either the dam will give way or the house will break up and the women will be swept over."

With this uneasy conviction as an incentive, the amateur mariners bent every mental power to encourage the tiny engine to greater efforts. If concentration and power of will could keep a motor going, that engine didn't have a chance in the world to stop.

The improvised boat was leaking more like a colander than like a sieve. One of the men kept bailing constantly with an inade-

quate sort of a dipper. By working feverishly, it was possible to keep the water in the boat about the level at which it had stood when they got in, but there seemed to be no hope of lowering it.

"We're not going fast enough," Cato Dodd wailed, after they had been out fifteen minutes. "We can't make it in time!"

They were only a few hundred yards from the house, but the dam was not more than a quarter of a mile away.

"We can't speed up any more, I'm afraid," Vogt declared in response to his employer's suggestion that they were not going fast enough. "We might run a little better without quite so much weight."

"One of us ought to get out," George avowed.

"Thanks, old man, for volunteering!" faltered Fred.

"But I didn't volunteer."

"It was the same thing," Fred argued. "You said one of us should do it, and you're the logical man. Vogt has to stay to run the engine, and Uncle Cato and myself are both married men with wives dependent upon us. Heaven will reward you for this noble sacrifice, George!"

"Shucks!" said George with disgust. "Flora would miss me more than your wives will you. Why don't the old boy do it? He's dying, anyway."

"He doesn't look it."

He did not, for a fact. Cato Dodd had quite forgotten his foot and his stomach. Aside from being harassed with anxiety for his wife, he was a picture of good health.

"Besides," George argued, "he's the heaviest of the lot, and Mrs. Dodd doesn't care for him any more."

"I think you're mistaken; but even at that, you surely wouldn't suggest throwing a helpless old man over into that cold water? There may be sharks there."

"Not a chance—nothing more voracious than a man-eating pollywog."

"We've got to lighten her." This corroboration of their decision came from Cato Dodd himself.

"See, the old boy is going to volunteer!" exclaimed George. "I knew he'd see it that way. Of course I hate to see him go, but—"

"What's in all these boxes and baskets?" Cato inquired, kicking at a pile of cases that was stacked amidships.

"Oh, just some canned goods and a bushel of potatoes and a ham and a few little things like that," Vogt explained. "I thought you might be hungry."

"Somebody help me throw these overboard," commanded the millionaire without hesitation. "Come, Blithers, lend a hand here!"

"You're not going to throw away real food?" George protested, painfully conscious of a gnawing sensation at the pit of his stomach. "You know we haven't had a meal for some little time."

"Over they go!" Mr. Dodd ordered, dropping an excellent-looking ham over the side by way of example. "What does food count against our wives?"

George watched the place where the ham had disappeared.

"I feel as if I'd lost an old friend," he murmured with a sigh.

But the work of destruction went on. Every box was lifted to the side and dumped ruthlessly into the muddy water. The last case was suspiciously heavy.

"What's this?" asked Mr. Dodd curiously, balancing it on the gunwale.

"That?" said the secretary, peering at it to make out the label in the moonlight. "Why, that's a case of Dodd's Malt Whisky. I brought it along for you, sir."

"Wait just a minute," Cato ordered. "Let me think!"

They waited and he thought.

"Let it go!" he finally decided.

It went with a sickening splash. But the boat was more buoyant, rode higher on the water, and consequently made a shade better speed.

Even at that the house struck the lower dam a few seconds before they could reach it. Fortunately, however, the masonry did not give way, though it looked as if it could not hold much longer. Fortunately, too, the women on the roof realized their danger and were all ready to be rescued. They were crowded at the parapet on the side away from the dam, and as the improvised salvage ship came alongside they immediately clambered over into the waiting arms of their rescuers.

There was no time for any one to notice that it was Fred who held the supposed Mrs. Blithers, or that Blithers clasped firmly the shapely form of the alleged Mrs. Wetherill. Cato Dodd did not notice be-

cause he was so concerned with the business of assisting Mrs. Dodd, and Mr. Vogt had his hands full helping Nora over the side and then starting the engine for the return trip.

Finally they squared away and headed against the current. It was a struggle, and their progress was painfully slow; but they did progress. The little motor settled down to its task and thrashed the water like a twin-screw liner.

With the added weight, however, the ark of rescue was very low in the stream, and the water squirted in fearsomely through the seams. Fred and George took turns bailing, while Cato Dodd sat silent, with one arm around his wife and a fatuous smile upon his face. They sat that way until Mrs. Dodd happened to notice it, and then she gently disengaged his arm.

"This is hardly respectable, Cato," she told him. "What would people think of us? You might at least wait until after we are divorced."

"What is the need of getting a divorce?" he cooed.

She looked at him wistfully.

"It would only mean starting our troubles all over again. We have different ideas about things."

"Myra, if you'll come back, I'll have no more alcohol in the house," he promised; "and I'll eat Pfefferblätter's Puppy Biscuits until I can bark and wag my tail!"

"Will you give up that 'After the Bath' picture?" she asked.

"Well—" he hesitated.

"See," she pointed out. "You're really a dear, Cato, and I certainly appreciate the sacrifices you are willing to make; but I couldn't give up my convictions about that picture any more than you could about Saint Gawkins's beautiful fresco."

"I'll stand for that, too, if you say so," growled her husband agreeably. "I realize that being a woman you have to have a foolish streak somewhere."

"Besides," she went on, "I swore that I would never cross the threshold of your house again."

The discussion did not halt until the boat arrived at the Dodd mansion. Then it stopped only while every one else got out.

Fred and Hyla scrambled over the slanting roof to the sheltering window. Flora, assisted by George, followed suit; Nora with

the assistance of every man in the party, was speedily restored to the arms of Augustus, who positively whinnied at seeing her again. Then, finally, Cato Dodd got out and stood on the roof, holding out a helping hand to his wife, while his secretary, Mr. Vogt, steadied the boat.

"No, Cato!" she denied him firmly. "I said I'd never cross your threshold after what you said, and I won't!"

"You won't be crossing the threshold, Myra. This is the window-sill," her legal lord and master pointed out.

"It's the same idea," the lady insisted.

"Just stop for a little refreshment," urged Cato. "One Pfefferblätter and a glass of Apollinaris!"

"No, I'd prefer to go on to town, if Mr. Vogt will take me. I should be glad to have Mr. Saint Gawkins go with me, if he will."

"All right," agreed her husband. "Oh, Ben!" he called.

"Yes, sir." The sign-painter appeared at the window.

"Mrs. Dodd says she'll give you a lift if you want to go with her, Ben."

Ferguson gazed at his former patron, and his former patron gazed back at the transformed futurist.

"Why, is that you, Mr. Saint Gawkins?" Mrs. Dodd asked after a painful pause.

"Yes," he admitted, "but my real name is Ben Ferguson."

"Do you want to go?" Dodd repeated.

"I'd rather stay with you, boss," Ben decided.

"But, Cato," Mrs. Dodd pointed out, "you detest futurist artists so!"

"Not Ben," her husband told her. "Ben is reformed. He isn't going to paint anything but copies of 'After the Bath' as long as he lives."

During this rather protracted colloquy no one had been paying any attention to bailing, with the result that the water in the bottom of the boat had been gaining steadily. The occupants, because their feet and ankles were already soaked, had not paid any particular attention, but now, unobtrusively, the rough craft sank under them.

It went down slowly like a stage trap. They simply watched it in stupefied silence. Even Mrs. Dodd was too much surprised to scream until she was more than half under water.

Mr. Vogt, who had been holding on to the

roof to steady the boat, managed to draw himself up to a place of safety. Then he turned to offer a helping hand to Mrs. Dodd; but it was too late. He touched her fingertips, but they slipped from his fingers, and she disappeared from sight.

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Mr. Dodd in acute dismay. "What'll we do? She can't swim!"

"Can't swim?"

"No. She was going to learn this winter, but didn't."

"Help!"—a shout from the lady in the water.

"Coming!"

The paralyzed onlookers at the window were pushed ruthlessly aside. A lithe, white-clad figure clambered over the sill to the roof, poised a second to locate the floundering Mrs. Dodd, and dived in after her.

"Who is it?" asked Mr. Dodd.

"It's Undine, the diving Venus," declared George, who was proudly holding an armful of feminine clothing. "She'll save your wife—have no fear. She's as much at home in the water as she is upon the land, and she copies the exquisite grace of the fish and the sea-lion in her movements."

"And in the next cage," added Fred Wetherill mockingly, "you will find the celebrated Numidian polar bear, who lives upon live—"

"Shut up!" George admonished testily.

It was only a moment before Flora had Mrs. Dodd in tow and was swimming back easily to the roof. Half a dozen hands helped them to climb to safety and hauled them through the window.

"Come over by the fire," invited the plumber—who, the practical man in an emergency, had thoughtfully built it up to tremendous proportions. "You're apt to have a chill."

This seemed good advice, and Cato Dodd supported his half-drowned wife to a position in front of the fireplace, while Flora walked over by herself, followed by the humbly admiring George Fitzgerald.

Well might he be proud. If ever there was a beautiful woman appropriately clad it was Flora in Mrs. Dodd's white one-piece bathing-suit. With the shifting yellow lights of the wood fire playing over the soft, glistening curves of her young body, she might easily have been a Rhine maiden straight from the "Nibelungenlied."



Even Cato Dodd, absorbed as he was in helping his wife, could not restrain an exclamation of admiration.

"By George, what is it that girl reminds me of?"

"Shall I help you to get back into your clothes?" Nora inquired solicitously of the heroine of the hour.

Flora laughed.

"I'm afraid I tore every hook and eye off that dress when I stripped it off. It wasn't made for a quick-change act, and I doubt if it can ever be worn again. It's lucky I put on this bathing-suit when I got up this morning. I thought I would swim ashore if the flood didn't subside."

"Get her my heavy overcoat to put on," suggested Cato Dodd. "It's up here somewhere in a cedar chest."

Mrs. Dodd had recovered the use of her breathing and talking apparatus by this time.

"Well, I came into your house in spite of myself, Cato, didn't I? Now that I'm here, I suppose I may as well stay!"

"Thank Heaven for that!" murmured her husband, embracing her regardless of her wet garments. "And thank you, too, my dear," he added, turning impulsively to Flora.

"Yes, indeed," echoed Mrs. Dodd. "I can never show my gratitude enough. I shall always remember you as you are now, my beautiful rescuer! I wish that we might have a picture of you to put upon the walls of our home."

Flora laughed loudly and clearly.

"You had a picture of me, but you took it down."

"Had a picture of you?"

"Yes—'After the Bath.'"

"You posed for that?"

"Yes. I was an artist's model ten years ago, when that picture was painted, and I used to pose for Svenjorgenson. I was only sixteen then."

"That's why I liked you so well the moment I saw you," Cato Dodd exclaimed. "Your face and your figure have been associated with my success all through life. And now the picture is gone!"

"It is quite safe," Mrs. Dodd interrupted. "I had it stored in the city, at Noodler's, and you shall have it replaced. I will send for it to-morrow."

A sigh of content escaped the lips of Cato Dodd.

"I am absolutely happy! I have my wife back, and I shall soon have my beautiful picture. And in addition I have you, too, Mrs. Wetherill, from whom it was painted."

"I'm sorry," said Fred, stepping forward, "but she isn't Mrs. Wetherill. I'm afraid I deceived you, uncle."

While he was briefly relating the deception that had been practised, Nora placed about the shoulders of the beautiful Undine a dark fur coat, which enveloped her in voluminous folds.

"That's all right, Fred," said Cato Dodd, generous and forgiving. "But for you and your deception I would not have won back my wife, or made the acquaintance of Flora, whom I hope we may regard in the future just as we would our own daughter."

"Then, if I marry her," mused George, "I'll be just like your son!"

"Impossible—not with the name of Blithers!" Cato Dodd was firm upon that point.

"My name isn't Blithers—"

"And you're not going to marry me!" declared Flora, with a choke in her voice.

"Why, what's the matter now, dear?"

"In the excitement I had almost forgotten my Freddy. I want my Freddy!"

"Oh, you cat!" exclaimed Hyla, as with sudden remembrance she broke from the encircling arms of her husband.

"Hyla!"

"Don't touch me! Go to her—she wants you!"

"I had forgotten until this coat reminded me," Flora went on. "It's sealskin, and probably it was made from a poor, little baby seal like my Freddy. Take it away! Take it away!"

She started to emerge in all her startling white pinkness from the fur protection.

"Wait a minute—keep it on," admonished Cato Dodd. "I hate to admit it, but that coat was made from muskrat pelts, so it isn't anything to cry over."

The conversation and Flora's tears were cut short by a series of short, sharp, excited yelps or barks from somewhere either outside or down-stairs.

"What's that?"

"Where did it come from?"

"It's Freddy!" Flora exclaimed. "I'd know his bark in a million. Wait!" She threw back her head and uttered a mournful

cry—"Oo-la-loo-la-loo!"—long drawn out. "He'll come when he hears that."

"I should think so!" the plumber remarked.

And he did. From the stairway, thumping his flippers and his tail, came waddling a small sea-lion, barking every step of the way. Flora leaned over and threw her arms about his neck.

"Mother's own precious Freddy came back to her, didn't he?"

Freddy barked.

"And it's hungry, isn't it? Wait!"

She reached into the aquarium near by, and deftly seized and extracted a goldfish, which she popped into Freddy's open mouth. Hawkins was the only person who voiced a protest.

"You're not going to feed him those expensive goldfish, are you, ma'am?"

"Have you any other fish for him?" Flora inquired coldly. "Freddy has to have his fish regularly, and he's probably been without any for over a day. To starve him any longer would be cruelty to animals."

"It's cruel to the fish to let him eat them," the butler observed mildly.

Which is about as far as any argument on that subject ever gets. Hawkins retired, and Flora fed Freddy the fish.

"You see, Hyla," Fred Wetherill was saying to his wife, "you did me an injustice. She really did have a pet seal named Freddy."

"I suppose you are right," Hyla admitted reluctantly.

"By George, I've found it!"

"Found what?" demanded Fred irritably, turning toward the taxi-driver, who had uttered the exclamation.

"My taximeter. And the clockwork is still running! I'll figure up the amount in a minute."

"Oh, I want to go home!" This with fresh vehemence from Hyla, who was crying quietly in her husband's arms.

"So do I," murmured Fred, "if only to get away from that taximeter!"

"If my father is dead—oh, oh, oh!"

Hyla started to sob anew. Mr. Vogt, who had been an enforced witness to this scene, suddenly remembered something. Putting his hand into his pocket, he fished out a yellow envelope, which he silently handed to Fred Wetherill.

"Here's your telegram, sweetheart," Wetherill told his wife, who was weeping on his shoulder.

"You read it to me," she asked. "My eyes are too full of tears."

Fred opened the envelope, extracted the message, and read:

If you chase after your husband his love cannot be expected to live. Read "Marriage Compendium" and come home at once.

MOTHER.

Fred laughed long and loud as he folded his wife tenderly in his arms.

"So you've got one of those books, too, have you?" he questioned. "Have you been trying it out?"

Hyla nodded.

"That's why I wasn't home for dinner the night your uncle's telegram came."

"Give me your copy of the book."

Hyla reached into the bosom of her dress and produced a small red volume, a companion to one that Fred took from a vest-pocket.

"We'll give these to Augustus," he declared, taking hers and presenting both to the Swedish lover. "He won't be able to read them, so they can't possibly do him any harm. We'll try living together for the rest of our married life without any rules!"

"Ting-a-ling-a-ling!"

"Now what's that bell?" inquired Cato Dodd. "It sounded like the telephone on the floor below."

"It is," answered Hawkins, who stood at the head of the stairs. "The flood has subsided, sir."

"The lower dam must have given way," mused the owner of the house. "Hawkins!"

"Yes, sir."

"Take some of this broken furniture down-stairs and start a fire in the kitchen stove. Cook, I hereby hire you again at ten dollars more per month than you got before."

"But, sir, I'm working for Mrs. Dodd now."

"It's all the same, isn't it, Myra?"

"Yes, Cato."

"Flora!"

"Georgy Porgy!"

Ensued a passionate and happy silence, out of which emerged harshly a voice of the commercial world:

"This taximeter reads two hundred and eighty-seven dollars, and I want my money!"